



THE TEN BEST IDEAS OF THE DECADE

10

WHY LAWYERS ARE TURNING TO GUMSHOES

I'M HAPPY TO BE TOTALLY POTTY

England page 16

Cockroaches and mice found in Diana's favourite supermarket

STEVE BOGGAN

Sainsbury's flagship superstore, which boasts the Princess of Wales and Elton John as customers, has been threatened with prosecution because of an infestation of vermin.

Despite two visits during which warnings were given to the store management, the environmental services department of the council found as recently as 14 November that "there is a current problem with a mouse infestation in areas of the premises". Staff at the store say they also regularly see cockroaches.

A letter dated 15 November from Ailie Gardiner, a Kensington and Chelsea environmental health officer, to Peter Sones, general manager of the

store, says: "Urgent and effective attention must be given to this situation with a view to eliminating the infestation from the premises and preventing any further ingress of pests. Pest infestations in a food premises are obviously an unacceptable situation. Please note this Directorate may consider taking further legal action on this matter."

Mrs Gardiner said she was aware that a pest control company, Peter Cox Environmental Services, had been engaged

to tackle the problems, but she concluded: "It is my opinion that this problem is not being dealt with in a sufficiently effective manner."

She added that she raised the question of areas of the store being securely proofed against "pests" on 16 and 28 February, but the letter demonstrates clear dissatisfaction with the action taken by the food group.

The store is regularly described by industry experts as the group's most profitable and by the media as the country's

most successful pick-up supermarket for singles.

As well as Princess Diana, Princes William and Harry and a host of ladies-in-waiting, staff say celebrity shoppers include Joanna Lumley, Elton John, Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, Willie Rushton, Nicholas Witchell and Moira Stuart. While appearing at nearby Earls Court, Whitney Houston and Madonna had staff buy provisions from the store.

Management has clearly taken the warnings to heart. Mem-

os have appeared on a first-floor staff noticeboard advising employees of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. A small wallchart carries pictures of rats, mice, cockroaches, silverfish, flies, wasps and ants, and advises workers on what to do if they see them.

An internal memo to management from Jock Cross, the deputy store manager, a copy of which has been obtained by the *Independent*, warns: "We have to give this situation major priority as we are under threat of

prosecution for [being] a dirty store. If we are prosecuted, the business implications are of an extremely serious nature."

Staff at the store said they regularly saw mice in storage areas and in the staff canteen on the first floor. One employee said she often saw cockroaches. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea confirmed there was a problem at the store and said health officials visited yesterday to ensure Sainsbury's was solving it.

"They have given us a report outlining what action they are taking to eradicate the problem," a spokeswoman said. "We will consider taking action under the 1990 Food Safety Act if we feel that the work is not being carried out diligently."

Sainsbury's said last night it had "implemented a full and intensive control programme" and was working closely with the local authority to eradicate the problem. A spokeswoman said the company felt the situation was "under control".

Last-ditch deal rescues Irish peace

New accord to greet Clinton

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

A compromise by both sides led to a last-minute breakthrough in the Anglo-Irish peace talks last night, after a day of desperate negotiations between officials to reach an accord before the arrival of the US President Bill Clinton in Britain today.

John Major and John Bruton were expected to put the seal on the agreement to end the deadlock and open the way to all-party talks involving Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionists.

After brinkmanship on both sides, Dublin and London tried to avoid claiming victory but there were reports at Westminster of a compromise by the Irish. One ministerial source said: "The Irish gave way and that has suddenly swung everything in favour of a deal."

The arrival of the US President put pressure on both sides to reach a deal, and British officials privately admitted that the British side wanted to avoid Mr Clinton being seen as the peacemaker. The two Prime Ministers may announce the details while Mr Clinton is in Britain, but the US President will not be allowed to bring the two Prime Ministers together like the famous Arafat-Rabin peace handshake on the lawn of the White House.

"There will be no tryst in Dublin," said one official.

British sources said the Irish were clearly hoping that Mr Clinton would now put pressure on Gerry Adams, the Sinn Féin president, to accept the deal. "There is compromise on both sides. There are some things that Adams will not like, but there are other things that will have him fawningly hugging mad and David Trimble won't like."

The formula will provide for an international commission, probably headed by George Mitchell, Mr Clinton's respected economic adviser, to oversee the dismantling of some of the

IRA arms caches. In a twin-track approach, there will be simultaneous preliminary talks between the two governments and party leaders. They will attempt to lay the ground for all-party talks, which could start in February. The Ulster Unionists' proposal for an elected

commission on Washington Three and on all the weapons, including those held by the security forces. The British insist the commission will not be able to make recommendations on those two issues, which the nationalists say are crucial.

However, on the Irish side, there was an understanding that the commission would be able to report on those issues.

Mr Major faced Tory backbench pressure in the Commons not to give way on the decommissioning demand for the IRA. He replied: "The building blocks paper we published recently sets down specific requirements for the body's report. It sets down also that the international body is not being established to make recommendations on when the decommissioning should start. That has not been changed."

The issue was raised during Prime Minister's Questions by Mrs Margaret Ewing (SNP Moray) who said: "There is now widespread concern at what appears to be an impasse. In these circumstances do you now feel it is time to establish an international commission to help matters on?"

Mr Major told her: "I naturally hope we will soon be able to launch what has become known as the twin-track initiative. I have had a further conversation with the Irish Prime Minister earlier today and I expect to speak to him later on this afternoon."

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble said he was "deeply sceptical" about the "twin-track" strategy that London and Dublin were working on. He insisted it would not deal with the real problems. "It would merely set up some procedures and postpone... the crucial decision on whether Sinn Féin-IRA are prepared to prove they are committed to exclusively peaceful means by beginning to dispose of their, we hope, now redundant weapons."

A senior Government source said the Irish had agreed to the formula for a twin-track strategy broadly laid out last Friday, before pulling back. Under the formula, the British insist that the precondition on arms, known as Washington Three, will not be included in the remit of the proposed international commission to deal with decommissioning of weapons.

The compromise agreed by the British is that Sinn Féin will be able to give evidence to the



Clinton: Arrives today to find peace process on track

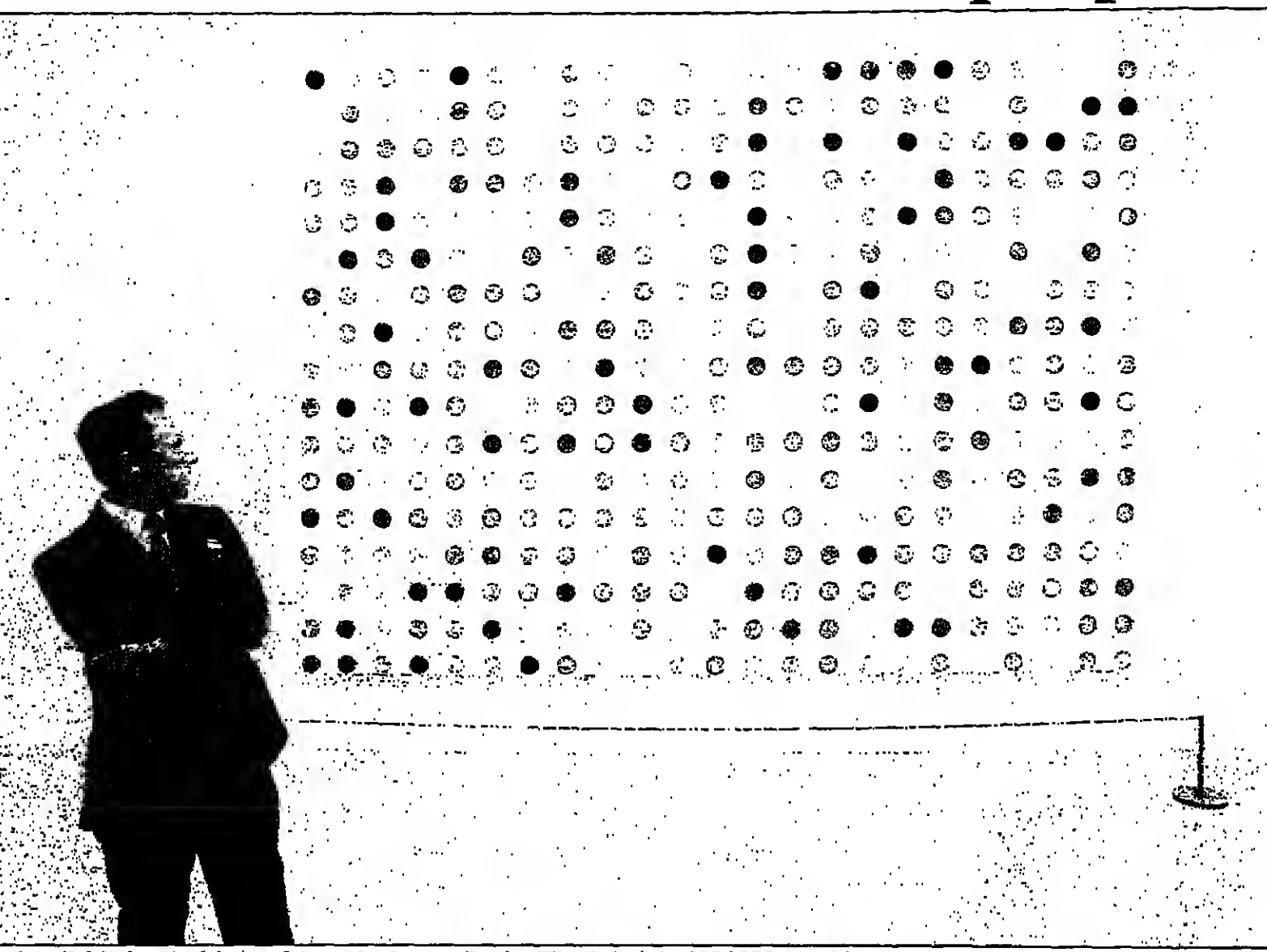
assembly in Ulster will be included.

The Prime Minister assured MPs in the Commons, as rumours of an emergency summit swept through Westminster, that there would be no compromise over the British demand that Sinn Féin should make progress on decommissioning before being admitted to the all-party talks.

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'Enfant Terrible' Hirst wins spot prize



Spot on: 'Asialoglycophorin', one of the works that won Damien Hirst (below) the £20,000 Turner Prize

Photograph: Dillon Bryden

DAVID LISTER
Arts Correspondent

Damien Hirst, the *enfant terrible* of contemporary art, last night won the £20,000 Turner Prize to the sound of animal rights protesters shouting abuse at him.

Hirst's installation works have studiously courted controversy since he burst on the scene a few years ago. But his Turner Prize entry, showing a cow and calf bisected longitudinally and presented in a glass case, was the first Tate Gallery exhibit to provoke a demonstration by animal lovers. *Mother and Child Divided* allegedly explores the themes of mortality and isolation. In less provocative mood, Hirst also exhibited two of his "spot" paintings - white canvases covered with a slightly irregular grid of coloured circles.

Hirst, 30, was tipped to win the prize, and is a favourite of the contemporary art establishment and fashion designers



who are increasingly using him as a male model. He has been short-listed for the Turner Prize once before. Previous exhibits include both a shark and a sheep pickled in formaldehyde and displayed in glass.

Yesterday he said: "I haven't killed anything for art. I like people who like animals."

The Turner Prize being what it is, Hirst's winning exhibit could not claim to be the most controversial. One of the short-listed entrants was Mona

Haloun who showed a video of her own internal organs, having used medical technology to have cameras inserted into her.

The Tate Gallery's catalogue explained: "As the camera encounters an orifice, it enters, and the interminable forested landscape of the surface gives way to glowing subterranean tunnels lined with pulsating animate tissue, moist and glistening."

Also on the short list were Callum Innes, abstract painter, and Mark Wallinger, whose works included a video of the Queen arriving at Ascot races.

The Turner Prize short-list is exhibited at the Tate Gallery until the end of the week. Images of Mr Hirst's bisected animals and of the other artists' work will also be available across the Internet for the first time.

The judges included Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate Gallery (chairman); Elizabeth MacGregor, director of the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; and the art critic William Feaver.

Hirst review, page 3

Founders.

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IN BRIEF

Patients' lives 'at risk'

Patients' lives are being threatened following surgery by a "substantial" shortfall in critical care facilities in British hospitals, doctors warned. Page 2

Libel trial told of feud

The feud between the MP David Askey and his wife erupted again when she shouted "Queenie, queenie" at him and an elderly male friend, the High Court was told. Page 4

Boxer in hiding

The British boxer Warren Stowe has retreated to his South African hotel room and is staying there most of each day after his fight in Cape Town on Sunday night was halted by gunfire. Page 8

Government wastage

Government office space, equivalent to nearly two Canary Wharf towers or 70 Wembley stadium pitches, is costing the taxpayer £100m a year. Page 5

US 'shifting on Bosnia'

President Clinton seems to have begun to nudge a sceptical US public towards support for sending 20,000 American troops to the Balkans. Page 7

Boxer in hiding

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Meningitis case at London school

PETER VICTOR

Parents at a London school were warned to watch their children for signs of meningitis after a 16-year-old girl was admitted to hospital with the disease. The scare follows five deaths from meningitis in Lincoln and the death yesterday of a university student from Leeds. Parents of girls at the 700-pupil Godolphin Latymer School in Hammersmith, west London, were told of the latest outbreak of the disease by letter yesterday after the girl was admitted to St Thomas's Hospital on Saturday.

In the letter, Dr Tony Ellam,

consultant in communicable disease control at Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Health Authority, said parents should be "alert to the possibility that your child is becoming unwell with 'flu-like' symptoms with aches and pains in the joints or muscles or an increasingly severe headache."

Headmistress Margaret Rudland confirmed yesterday that the school remained open. Dr Ellam said pupils had not been given antibiotics because their effect was short-lived and tended to lull parents into believing that their children would be safe from the disease in the long term.

Dr Ellam said that notifications of the disease were "tracking at 20 per cent up on last year" and warned that the increase was likely to be exacerbated by an expected flu epidemic.

The toll in Lincoln now stands at five following the deaths of Robert Newlin, also 19, a carpet shop manager, and Kelly Roberts and Samuel Bimms, both aged 15 and pupils at the City School.

Caroline East, 14, another pupil at the school who contracted the disease last week, is now off the critical list. Her condition is said to be stable. A 40-year-old Lincoln man is still

critically ill in Nottingham City Hospital.

In the Leeds case, a 21-year-old girl, who was studying at Leeds University, died from meningococcal meningitis at the same time as three schoolchildren and a baby were hit by what is believed to be the same bacterial strain.

The three children - a boy aged 16 and two girls aged nine and 10 - are recovering from the illness. The infant is still very poorly.

The university student who died has not been named. It is believed she was an exchange student and her parents are flying over from Canada.

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Whit, Iain Banks. Little Brown; hardback. rrp £15.99 now only **£11.99**. The Dark Room, Minette Walters. Macmillan; hardback. rrp £15.99 now only **£11.99**. Offers that speak volumes about Christmas at Waterstone's

Turner Prize: Winner finds support as most ambitious artist of his generation taking on frosty establishment

Hirst milks role as modern art's outrageous hero

LOUISA BUCK

Damien Hirst should have won the Turner Prize when he was nominated for it three years ago and I'm glad he's won it now. No one has done more to raise the profile of contemporary British art both at home and abroad – and by his outrageously ambitious art works and energetic case at dipping and dodging between the role of artist, curator, film director and media maverick, he's fired an entire generation with the belief that, even in the frosty climate of the British art world, anything's possible.

But it's more than a prolific, energetic output and an engaging way with the popular press. Hirst is an extraordinary and serious artist – he produces images that lodge themselves in the psyche and deal with issues

that are at the same time mundane and massive. He manages to splice spectacle with profound meditations on who and what we are, whether it's a preserved animal, a cabinet of drugs or medical instruments, or an explosive machine-made painting – his work grabs you by the throat and forces you to engage with it. It also proves that art can be funny, poetic and profound. That's why it gets under so many skins.

The work is also riddled with contradictions. It's as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Hirst presents a moving target – and he refuses to be pinned down to a single reading. Art huffs can talk about the legacy of Francis Bacon's writhing flesh contained within a geometric frame, the influence of Minimalism and Neo-Geo in Hirst's pristine containers, as

well as the whole history of *memento mori*, or there's the irony of something being killed to be preserved while simultaneously having eternal life in a liquid that's deadly poisonous. His hand-made paintings look mechanical and his mechanical paintings tap into the whole history of angst-ridden brushstrokes. His empty chairs and brimming ashtrays are mysteriously framed like film stills.

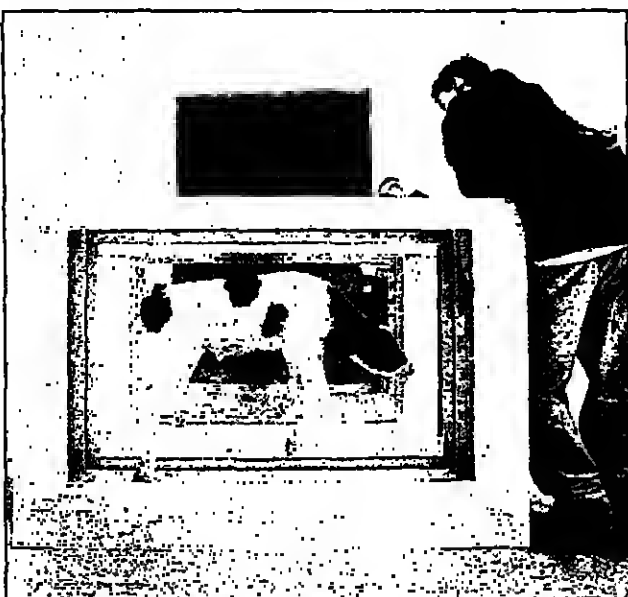
In winning the Turner, Hirst beat three others to the £20,000 prize: Mona Hatoum, a Palestinian exile made a 12-minute video of her body, outside and in. But mainly in. Footage of the pink internal passages is projected on the floor of a specially constructed cylindrical chamber.

The abstract painter Callum Innes applied turpentine to each paint from monochrome canvases, which in the case of white paint requires careful scrutiny to detect anything at all.

The fourth nominee, Mark Wallinger used racing images, including film of four days' royal processions at last year's Ascot, and the purchase of his own racehorse, called *A Real Work Of Art*.

Our national hostility to mercurial success, high profile or any artist's willingness to play the media game has meant that up to now, Hirst has had a more serious reputation abroad than at home.

Let's hope that winning the Turner this will now change, and that the Tate will purchase his *Mother and Child Divided* (Cow and Calf) – a cow and calf bisected longitudinally and presented in two parts, so that they will at least have two of his works to put in their new gallery at Bankside.



On the hoof: Hirst's better half Photograph: Dillon Bryden



High profile: Damien Hirst's work 'proves that art can be funny, poetic and profound' Photograph: Dillon Bryden

Ofsted denies it censored report

FRAN ABRAMS
JUDITH JUDD

The school-inspection body has denied political interference after a report highlighting underfunding in a comprehensive was ordered to be withdrawn.

Jane Rochelle-Towle, head of The Coleshill School, Warwickshire, received a call from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), saying the report she had distributed to parents was incorrect. Two days later she was sent a revised version, with comments on the school's budget deleted. Among comments taken out of the draft report were suggestions that its financial difficulties stemmed not from mismanagement or local political decisions but from national government policy.

Warwickshire county councillors said the events raised serious questions about the integrity of the inspection process. Last night Eric Wood, the county's chief education officer, wrote to the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, to demand an explanation of the incident.

Ofsted has denied the charges by county council, saying the report was altered by the contractor, Open Book, which employed a privatised inspection team, and not by its own officers or by the inspectors. Ofsted puts inspections out to tender, and private companies are among those that bid to carry them out. A spokeswoman said the revised version was the correct one, prepared by the registered inspector who was in charge of the inspection. Open Book had admitted the mistake.

"The error was made by the contractor who employs the registered inspector and has negotiated the contract. The contractor changed the registered inspector's report. The registered inspector was not consulted and had not agreed with the changed report. We have written to the school explaining the decision."

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news

Ashby libel case: Court hears men fled as 'all hell broke loose'

MP tells of furious wife's 'Queenie' jibe

The feud between the MP David Ashby and his wife erupted again when she shouted "Queenie, queenie" at himself and an elderly male friend, the High Court was told yesterday.

Mr Ashby, who is suing the *Sunday Times* for libel over an allegation that he shared a double bed with a male friend during a holiday in Goa, said that after upsets in 1993, when he left his wife, Silvana, he desperately rebuilt bridges with her.

The couple even spent a pleasant Christmas together in 1994 with their daughter, Alexandra, 27.

But the peace was shattered when Mrs Ashby, 52, discovered her husband, the 55-year-old Tory MP for North West Leicestershire, and a friend, Edward O'Byrne, at his constituency home in Ravenstone at the end of June.

Mr Ashby was watching TV and Mr O'Byrne, a retired civil servant who had recently suffered a stroke, was dozing in a



David Ashby: 'Obscenities'

chair when Mrs Ashby drove up at speed in a cloud of dust.

She charged in, put her hand on her hip and said: "So you are fucking older men now, are you?" Mr Ashby told Mr Justice Morland and the jury. He

said he tried to introduce his wife to Mr O'Byrne but she ignored him and shouted: "Queenie, queenie, so you are queenie."

She threw plates and kitchen knives at him, and he became worried that Mr O'Byrne might suffer another stroke.

The two men escaped to their separate rooms and locked themselves in while Mrs Ashby replaced the contents of her handbag, which Mr Ashby had emptied.

His wife then "stormed" up and down the landing, shouting obscenities about what they might be doing.

The next morning his wife threatened to kick him in the "bollocks" so that he could not have sex with anyone again, and pulled his glasses from his face, breaking them beyond repair.

He discovered she had taken his personal organiser from his briefcase and suspected she had also taken some important papers.

When he prised her hand open to get her bedroom key so he could search the room, "all hell broke loose" and she started kicking and scratching.

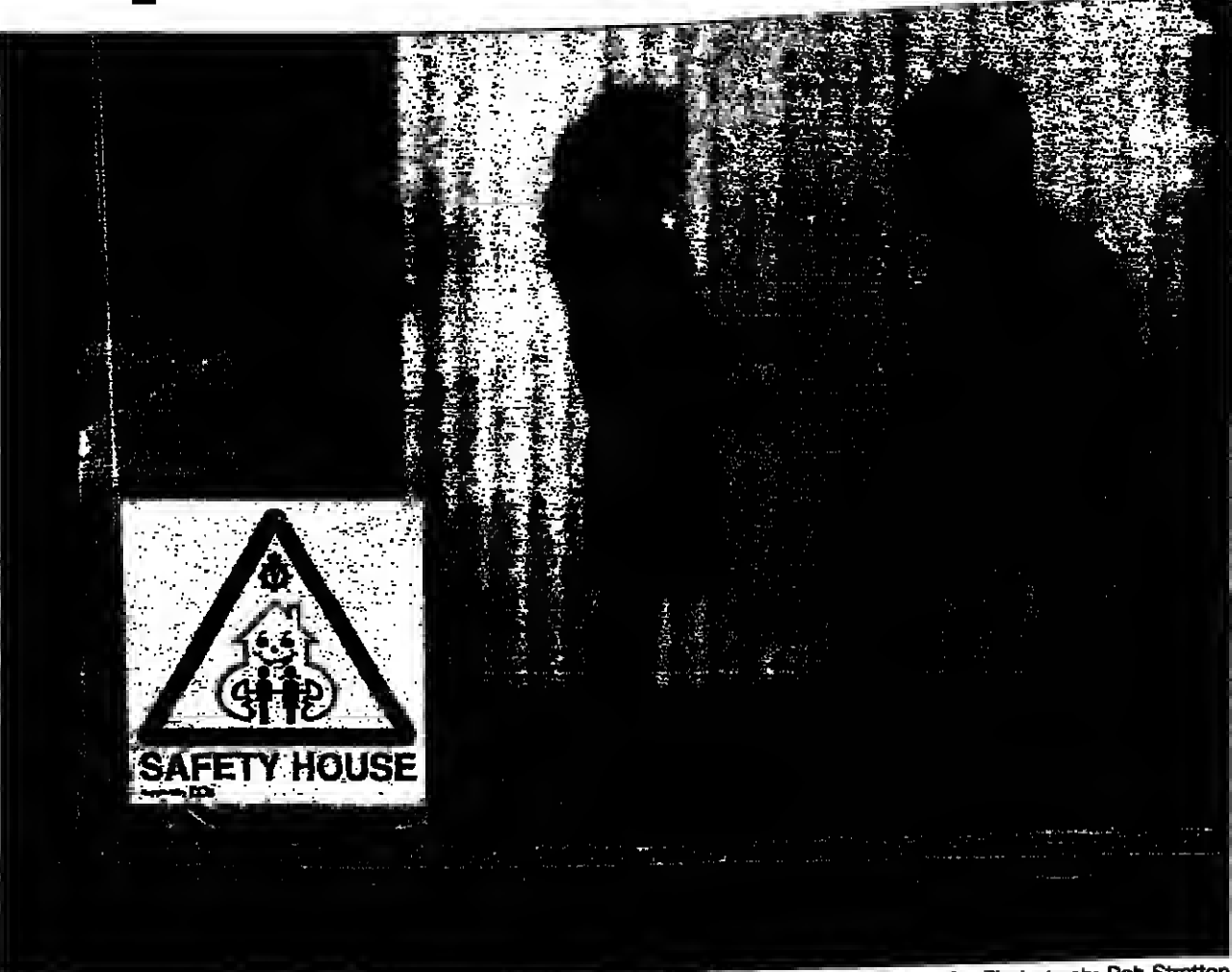
Later, although he was about 10 feet away from her, she started screaming "Help, help, he's beating me" and calling out for a neighbour.

Mr Ashby says the article about him in the *Sunday Times* in January 1994 alleged that he was a homosexual, who had misled Mrs Ashby about the nature of his sexuality; that he had lied to the public about having an affair with a Dr Ciaran Kilcliff; and that he was a hypocrite in emphasising the importance of the family in his last election address.

Times Newspapers Ltd and the former *Sunday Times* editor Andrew Neil deny libel, although they accept that Mr Ashby did not holiday with a man in Goa. They assert he was and is carrying on an affair with Dr Kilcliff.

The case continues.

Help for children is safe as houses



Help point: A window sticker identifying one of the 'safe houses' for children needing help Photograph: Rob Stratton

VICKY WARD

Parents in the Cardiff suburbs of St Mellons and Llanrumney have been asked to join a new police scheme to provide "safe houses" for children under threat on the streets.

The scheme is a replica of a system used in Australia since 1979. It was introduced to the neighbourhood by local policeman Brian Tucker, who lived in Australia for eight years.

The 30 parents so far involved have yellow stickers displayed prominently in their windows. They bear a black triangle and a humanised house, bugging two children. The words "Safety House" are underneath.

"The idea is to signal to children who may be feeling threatened, followed or just even sick," says Gail Lloyd, a nurse with two children who was one of the first to sign up. "I want to treat other children as I hope other parents would treat mine if they were in trouble."

Though crime is not bad in the area, residents were shaken by the discovery of the body of 15-year-old Claire Hood in nearby woods in January. "They haven't caught the person who did it," Ms Lloyd said.

The police are prepared for teasing troubles. "We make very sure that no unauthorised person gets hold of a sticker," says PC Tucker.

Police seek help from gays over murder in park

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

The naked and beaten body of a businessman on a trip to Liverpool was found in a park used by gays for sex, it was revealed yesterday.

Merseyside police yesterday appealed to the city's gay community to help in the investigation. Detectives believe that Gordon Miller, 36, may have been a victim of an anti-gay attack or could have been set upon by robbers as he took a short cut back to his hotel.

He was found in St John's Gardens on Monday morning. He died from a hail of blows to his head and face from a blunt object, which has not been recovered. His jeans and shirt were wrapped around his head, but an expensive watch, credit cards and some money were not taken. There was no indication of sexual assault.

Police said yesterday that Mr Miller had a girlfriend in Oxford and there was no evidence he was homosexual.

Nevertheless, he was killed in a park that was a known area for gay "cruising", and members of the homosexual community fear this could be the latest incident of "gay bashing". More

than a third of gay men and women - and half of those aged under 18 - have been victims of homophobic violence in the past five years, according to a new national survey. Earlier this month, three teenagers were charged with murder and attempted murder after an alleged attack on two men in a Plymouth park.

Mr Miller, an accounts manager from Oxford, had arrived in Liverpool on Sunday evening for a business meeting the following morning. He checked into the Adelphi Hotel, which is close to St John's Gardens, and left his room at about 8pm.

The small park, in an attractive part of the city, is used as a short cut between the business sector and an area of shops and bars. Police say there have not been any previous reports of attacks taking place in the park, although people are notoriously reluctant to report anti-homosexual assaults.

Detectives believe Mr Miller may have been one of three men seen arguing violently at about midnight on Sunday. Chief Inspector Frank Thompson, who is in charge of the investigation, said: "It may be that this is a one-off and he was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

DAILY POEM

The faint stars said

By Kathleen Raine

The faint stars said,
'Our distances of night,
These wastes of space,
Sight can in an instant cross.'

But who has passed
On soul's dark flight
Journeys beyond
The flash of our light.

I said, 'Whence he is travelling
Let no heart's grief of mine
Draw back a thought
To these dim skies,

Nor human tears
Drench those wings that pass,
Freely from earth's weight
And the wheel of stars.'

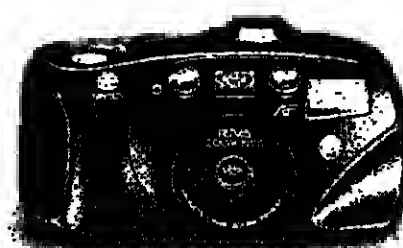
Kathleen Raine was born in London in 1908 and spent much of her childhood in Northumberland. She read Natural Sciences at Girton College, Cambridge, in the 1930s and published the first of ten volumes of poetry, *Stone and Flower*, in 1943. Her *Collected Poems* were published in 1981. She is, in essence, a metaphysical poet, concerned with abstract ideas of time and eternity. As a literary critic, she is particularly noted for her Blake scholarship. 'The faint stars said' is the introductory poem of her longest sequence poem *On a Deserted Shore*, first published in 1973, and recently republished by Agenda Press (5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London SW11 4PE, telephone 0171 228 0700).



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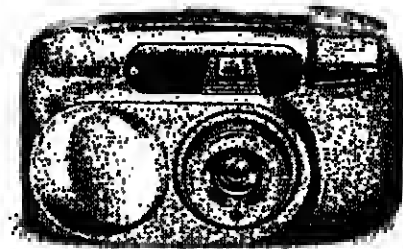
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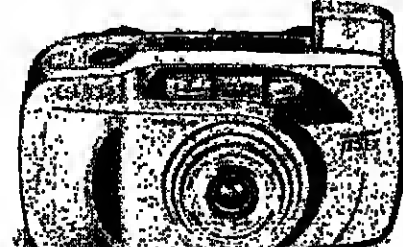
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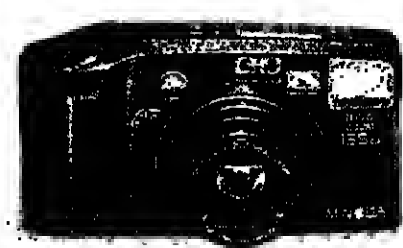
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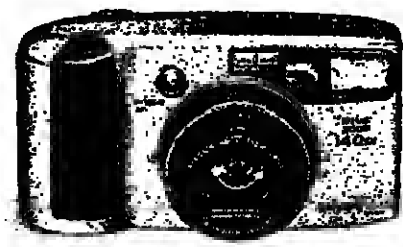
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Industry carpeted as pollution poses fresh threat to otter

JOHN MCKIE

The River Stour runs through Kidderminster, the carpet-manufacturing capital of Britain. People used to say that the river ran pink or blue, depending on which carpet dye was running in it at the time.

But that was in the halcyon era of carpet manufacturing 20 years ago when Kidderminster employed one in three of Britain's 45,000 carpet workers.

A great deal has happened since then. The carpet industry has had to meet various environmental requirements, dealing with threats posed by moth-proofing, toxic waste and chemical problems with dyes poured in the river. Kidderminster at present employs around 5,000 in the carpet industry—about one in two of the country's total.

Now the industry is under fire again. With Kidderminster's River Stour and huge carpet industry, the National Rivers Authority last week labelled it a "particular problem area".

Environmentalists are concerned that dyed wool which has been infected by sheep dip is



In danger: The Midlands is a 'black hole' for otters

ending up in the river producing diazinon, a highly toxic pesticide, which pollutes the river.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust has called the Stour "a black hole" for endangered otters. The creatures, which threatened to become extinct about 15 years ago, were appearing with greater frequency but the pesticides have changed that.

Mr Fraser told of the deaths of two otters recently in the Stour, and added that many more risk perishing in the Stour as they try to travel to the Avon or the Thames.

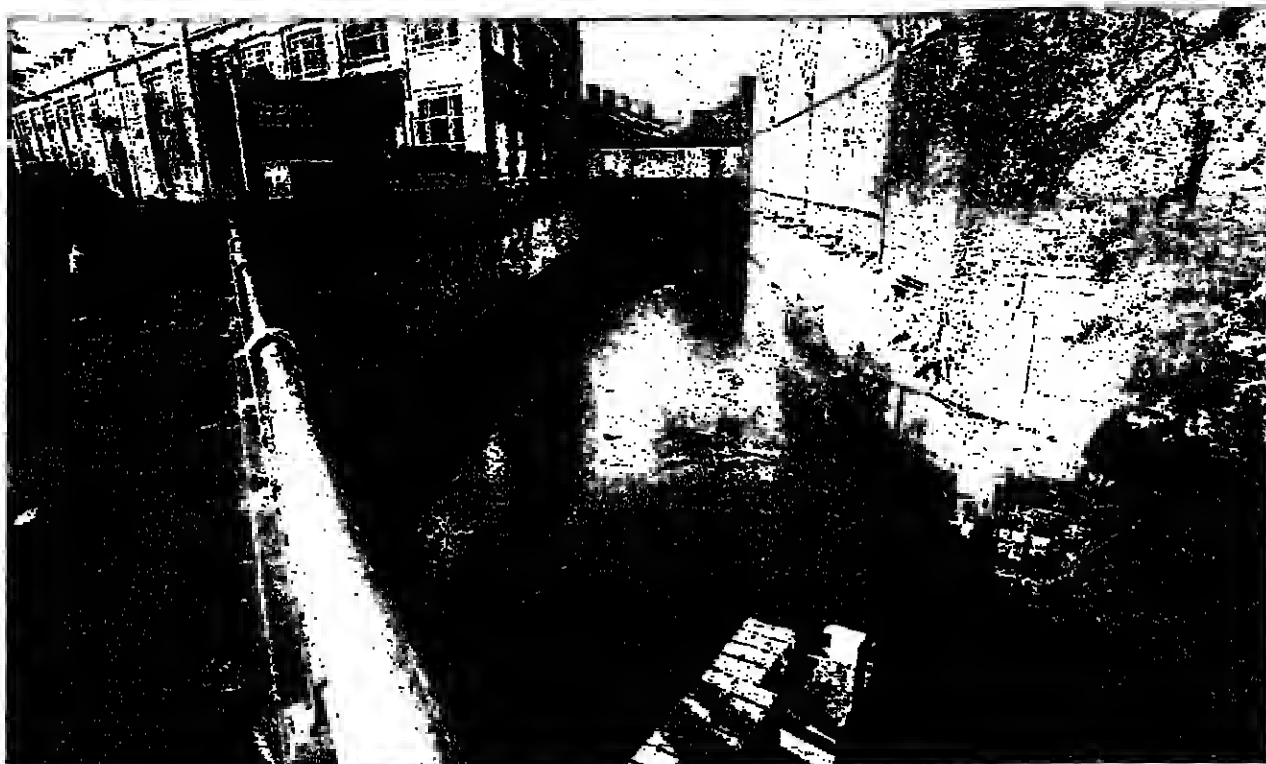
"Our concern is that the Midlands is acting like a black hole because the pollutants are too strong for them to sustain a viable breeding population."

The NRA and water authorities are the first to admit that the carpet manufacturers have done much to meet environmental requirements.

But some, including Hugh Wilson, director of the British Carpet-Manufacturing Association, feel that change is being ordered for the sake of change.

"The wool yarn is not perfect but it's nowhere as bad as it used to be. The problem is that the authorities tend to think of figures and then force us to meet those figures."

Some carpet firms in Kidderminster now import dyed wool but others feel indignant that enough progress has been made. Frank Wilson, of Tomkinsons Carpets, said: "The NRA recently commented to us on the quality of the Stour."



Dirty business: Environmentalists say the River Stour is polluted by waste wool

Photograph: John Potter

Government wastage on office space put at £100m

COLIN BROWN

Chief Political Correspondent

Empty government office space, equivalent to nearly two Canary Wharf towers or 70 Wembley stadium pitches, is costing the taxpayer £100m a year.

The disclosure will be an embarrassment for the Chancellor after his demands for cuts in roads, social security, and other government programmes to fund Budget tax cuts.

Around 700,000 square metres of office space are vacant. Some of the offices which ministers have moved to are in the luxury class. The merger of the Departments of Employment and Education has released one building in Victoria Street, but, relatively speaking, the new Education and Employment HQ makes many school buildings look almost derelict.

The Department of Environment is planning to vacate the Marsham Street towers, for a newer building near Victoria Street with a handsome glass entrance which critics have dubbed "John Gummer's tomato greenhouse".

The former Cabinet minister John Redwood said: "Who said cutting public expenditure is always difficult when there is the equivalent of 7 million square metres of office space around. It must be worth a capital value of £1bn. That would make a very nice contribution to tax cuts."

Mr Redwood, the right-wing challenger for the leadership against John Major this summer, staked his demand for tax cuts by demonstrating that much of his £5bn alternative Budget programme could be provided by cutting out waste.

The empty office space includes two former M16 buildings, one at Curzon Street, Mayfair, which has now been sold, and the other at Waterloo, now for sale on the commercial property market, vacated by the secret services for a lavish new office at Vauxhall Bridge; and the Alexander Fleming House tower block, designed by

Erno Goldfinger, at Elephant and Castle, which has stood empty for years, after being vacated by the former Department of Health and Social Security. Negotiations over the lease are nearing completion for it to be handed back to the landlord.

Ashdown House, in Victoria Street, Westminster, is also vacant after the Department of Trade and Industry moved to a newer office in the same street. The DTI has several offices in the Victoria Street area. A former Energy Department office with a glittering atrium in Palace Street is still held by the DTI and is being taken over by another department.

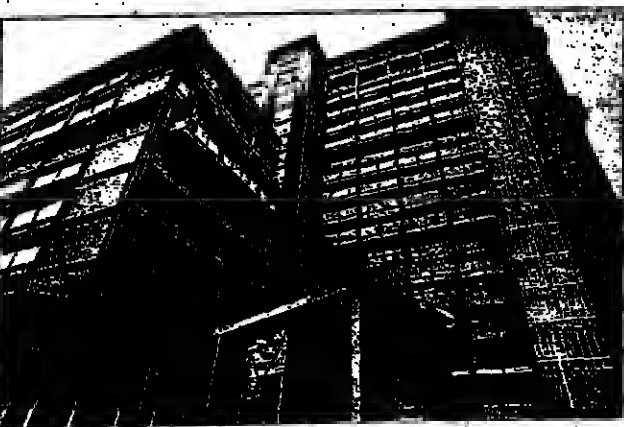
The Government's target for disposing of empty property was missed last year. It had aimed to reduce the amount of empty space to about 7.8 per cent of its estate, but it has risen to 10 per cent.

The Department of Environment which controls the estate confirmed that about 10 per cent of the 7 million sq metres of total office space owned by the government was still vacant.

A spokesman for the DoE said the target of £44m from sales of property had been exceeded, and much of the empty rented space was "at the poorer end of the market".

One reason for the failure of the Government to meet its disposal target is a change in rules next April, under which individual departments will become responsible with their own budgets for their offices.

Some departments have sought to lighten their burden by surrendering offices and passing the buck to the "Next Steps" agency, which will take over responsibility for disposing of government offices. As part of Treasury demands for savings, Whitehall departments, including Environment, Transport and Trade and Industry, are carrying out a rationalisation of office space, saving an estimated £25m a year through surrender or disposal of 20 buildings accounting for more than 175,000 sq metres in central London.



Vacant possession: Alexander Fleming House in south London has been empty since the departure of the DHSS

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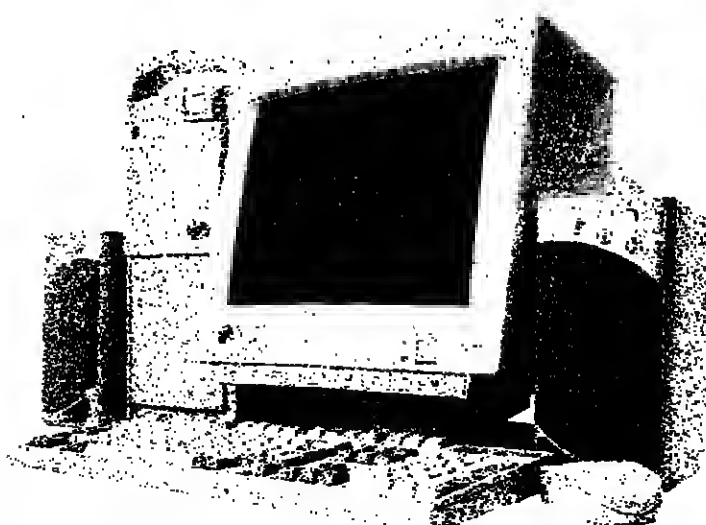
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news

Burns Festival in chaos after organiser flees



Eric Rowe: Gone missing

Cash crisis and rumours plunge poet's bicentenary celebrations into disarray, reports
John Arlidge

A festival marking the 200th anniversary next year of the death of Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, has been plunged into chaos after the chief organiser suddenly fled his home amid claims that the bicentenary celebration faced a cash crisis.

Eric Rowe, a councillor in Ayrshire where Burns was born, left his home abruptly several weeks ago. He later wrote to directors of the Burns International Festival Company telling them that he had resigned his post as chairman. His wife, Elizabeth, will not discuss the matter, nor reveal his whereabouts, but friends say he has given up everything and moved in with another woman at her home in Essex.

Mr Rowe's departure has left festival organisers struggling to raise more than £100,000 in the six weeks before the bicentenary year begins. Before he disappeared, Mr Rowe was criticised for failing to secure the £1m sponsorship that the festival needs.

Many Burnsians privately



Sorting it out: John Struthers, director of the festival, with a painting of the poet by Alexander Nasmyth

Photograph: Jeremy Sutton Hibbert

relish the disarray because during his lifetime the bard himself was famous for his poverty and torrid relationships with women. During one affair Burns even planned to flee, not to Essex, but to Jamaica. One writer, who belongs to a Burns society in Ayrshire, said: "This crisis couldn't have happened to a more deserving or appropriate festival. Burns was forever in debt and running off with the lassies. It adds a little realism - and more than a little realism - to the whole affair."

After Mr Rowe's disappearance

organisers insisted that they would "work hard to ensure that the festival is a great success". But last week matters went from bad to worse when the main event of the year collapsed. Plans to stage the world's biggest Burns Night Supper on his birthday, 25 January - with Scots enjoying haggis and a dram at tables around the world, all linked by satellite television - were abandoned when talks with the satellite company broke down. Now a single supper will be held in a Glasgow hotel.

Moreover, some literary critics have begun to cast doubt on the quality of the events. The official programme has still not been published but organisers confirm that few international stars have so far been signed up. Fears are growing that hoteliers in Kilmarnock and Ayr, who are preparing for an influx of up to 200,000 visitors predicted to spend some £4m, could be disappointed.

Despite all the setbacks, Mr Rowe's successors refuse to be too downhearted. They insist that negotiations with new

sponsors are "at an advanced stage". They predict that agreements to secure the remaining £100,000 will be signed in the next few weeks.

John Struthers, the former director of the Exeter and Devon Arts Centre who has the job of clearing up the mess, admits that mistakes have been made.

"The festival has had tremendous problems," he said. "In hindsight, we should have started things like fundraising earlier. But then this festival has never been held before. And when it is held again in 100

years' time, those things will be put right."

Some people, however, remain unimpressed. One local writer told the *Independent*: "It is extraordinary that things have been left so late. We don't even have a programme yet. Everyone knows that Burns died in 1796. Two-hundred years should have been enough time for everyone to get their act together, but they haven't."

Mr Struthers said last weekend that the festival programme would be published next month.

Rail safety fears trigger huge rise in inspectors

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The number of safety inspectors on the railways has increased dramatically as a result of the complexities of rail privatisation, fuelling fears that breaking up the network has led to an increase in risks.

According to the annual report of the Railways Inspectorate, due to be published early next month, there are 48 inspectors now, compared to 36 two years ago, because of the workload caused by separating British Rail into 25 train-operating companies, Railtrack and other companies.

The rise in inspectors backs up arguments put forward by senior sources within the industry who say the new safety regime drawn up as a result of the privatisation programme is inherently flawed. In particular, the responsibility given to Railtrack to investigate incidents on the railways causes concern on account of the organisation's imminent privatisation.

Under the new system, when an incident with safety implications occurs, Railtrack takes responsibility for the inquiry. As the resources of the Railways Inspectorate are limited, it only becomes involved in serious cases. Investigations of minor incidents, of which there are hundreds each year, are carried out by Railtrack.

Senior sources in BR say once Railtrack is privatised, it will be hard for it to remain impartial, as many findings may have severe financial implications. One source said: "What happens if Railtrack finds it needs to spend £10m on a particular safety device? Its direc-

tors may be tempted to avoid committing themselves to the expenditure because of the potential damaging effect on the company's share price."

Under the old system, British Rail passed on such problems to the Government, which was responsible for important investment decisions.

Senior industry figures also fear a privatised Railtrack will be tempted to blame other parts of the industry for incidents. "If a driver supposedly went through a red light, but he denies it and says that the signalling is faulty, there may be a temptation to dismiss his arguments too easily. A privatised organisation should not have the responsibility of carrying out investigations involving other bodies in the industry."

BR sources cite the air industry, which is regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority, and where accident investigations are always carried out by the Air Accidents Investigation Branch of the Department of Transport.

Next week, the inquiry report into September's fire on an InterCity High Speed Train at Maidenhead, which resulted in the death of a passenger, is likely to place part of the blame for the incident on the hasty break-up of the railways in preparation for privatisation.

The fire was caused by faulty maintenance, which allowed a diesel tank to fall off after its retaining bolts sheered. The maintenance is the responsibility of a soon-to-be privatised specialist company which was formerly part of BR. The report is likely to criticise the new devolved structure between the components of what used to be a unified BR.

Delays in prison parole 'costing £10m a year'

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Hundreds of prisoners are being detained unnecessarily and unfairly at a cost of millions of pounds to the taxpayer because of escalating delays in the parole system, according to internal prison service documents.

They show that more than half of the 5,000 prisoners eligible for parole each year are not being given decisions over their release until well after their earliest parole date has passed. In about half of these cases, the Parole Board will grant the prisoner immediate freedom.

Probation officers said yesterday that cases were being delayed by about eight weeks. With the costs of detention running at about £500 a week per prisoner, they estimated that the additional bill was in the region of £10m a year. And the hidden price of providing support to prisoners' families could

push overall costs even higher. Their concern is evidently shared at Prison Service headquarters. Tony Butler, the director of services, has written to governors saying: "This is not acceptable. Delays are unjust and costly [in the cases where parole is granted] and likely to be a significant cause of discontent amongst prisoners."

Mr Butler's instructions to governors show that the problems were exacerbated because 300 cases last year had been "wrongly processed" and had to be re-examined. "This led to considerable delays in the Parole Board and the Parole Unit as additional interviews had to be arranged at short notice. The knock-on effect caused delays to other cases in the first half of 1995."

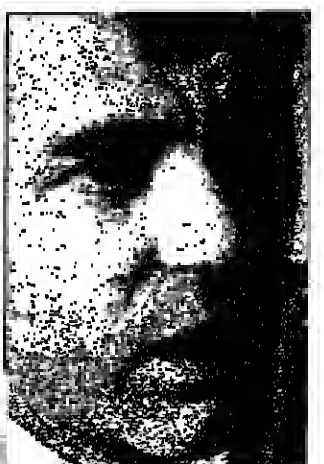
Incomplete reports and decisions to transfer prisoners - at short notice and just before parole hearings - to other jails had also contributed to the delays. The disclosure comes as gov-

ernors are having to cut education, welfare and work programmes, and possibly staffing levels in jails to meet budget cuts of up to 5 per cent this year.

Yesterday, Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "Napo warned ministers last February that the situation was getting out of control, but they have failed to deal with the problem. Cuts in the budget will make the situation impossible to remedy."

He said the decision to axe probation services - so far in 17 jails - will only add to the parole problems, because it is likely further to hinder preparation of reports. "Each time a prisoner serves longer than he or she needs, the sense of injustice mounts and the costs to the taxpayer accelerate."

Parole system changes in October 1992 meant that all those sentenced to four years or more had to apply for discretionary parole 26 weeks before their



Tony Butler: 'Unacceptable'

first eligibility date, halfway through their sentence. They are interviewed by a parole board member and their cases are considered by a parole panel. After a Home Office review, prisoners are supposed to be told whether they have qualified, three weeks before their release date.

Many prisoners with release dates for last September have still not been told whether or not they qualify. Probation officers say the increased workload caused by the record rise in the jail population - now at 52,521 - has contributed to the backlog.

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Baby's records 'falsified'

A nurse has been sacked for altering records about a seriously ill baby who died after being turned away from a hospital which has no full-time doctors. It was disclosed yesterday.

Margaret Thompson, a staff nurse at Berwick-upon-Tweed Infirmary, Northumberland, for 14 years, was dismissed after a disciplinary panel ruled that Ms Thompson rewrote and falsified entries on the casualty card and also tried to destroy original documentation.

Cheviot and Wansbeck NHS Trust said in a statement it was considered that her actions constituted gross professional misconduct. Ms Thompson, who has 21 days in which to appeal, was not making any comment.

Berwick Infirmary is 50 miles from the nearest large hospital but does not have full-time medical staff as the authorities consider there is too low a patient flow to justify it.

When Gordon and Angela Smith took 11-month-old Ryan, who was born with a heart defect, to the infirmary on 3 October they were told to take him to the GP's surgery, where he died - although an inquiry said he would probably have died even if he was treated at the hospital.

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Clinton swings US behind peace force

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Praised by political foe as well as friend, President Bill Clinton's speech on Bosnia seems to have begun to nudge a sceptical public here towards support for sending 20,000 American servicemen to help keep a precarious peace in the Balkans.

With the first few hundred US troops due in Bosnia next week, a poll taken immediately after Mr Clinton's prime-time televised address on Monday night showed 46 to 40 per cent in favour of US participation in the Nato mission - hardly a resounding vote of confidence, but an improvement on the solid majorities against direct US involvement before last week's Dayton peace talks.

Better still from the White House point of view, as Mr Clinton

timed could spread like poison, eat away at Europe's stability and erode our partnership with our European allies.

But the two most important Republicans took a far more conciliatory line than Mr Buchanan. Hinting that the Senate could even give an explicit vote of support for Mr Clinton, Bob Dole called the speech a "good start" at making the case for sending troops. "I want to find a way to support the President," said Mr Dole, doubtless not unmindful that as front-runner for the Republican nomination, he could find himself wrestling with the problem from the Oval Office less than 14 months hence.

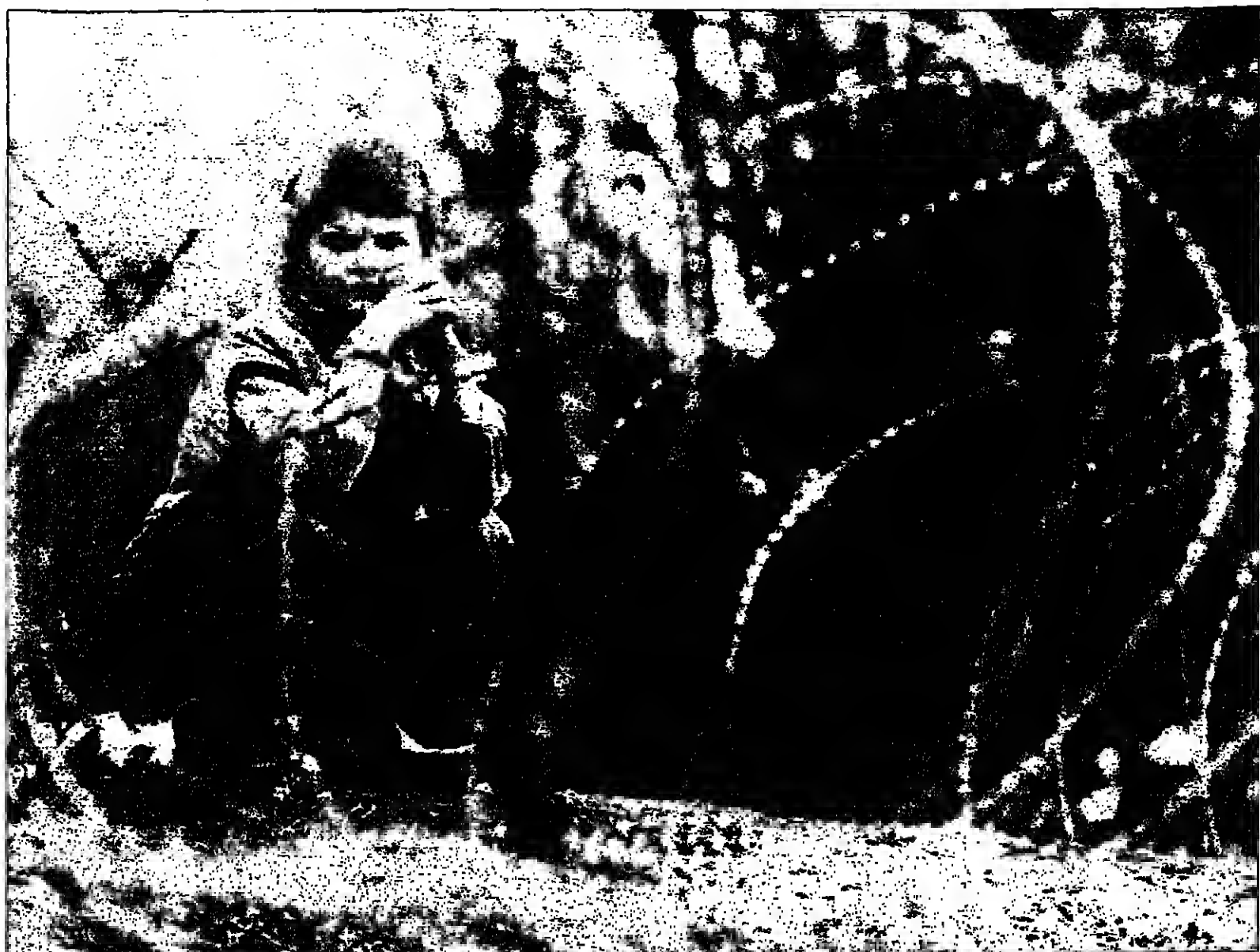
Speaker Newt Gingrich also left open the possibility he could back the President, saying his mind was open and that America should not miss a chance of bringing a durable peace to the Balkans. Even the Senate's most authoritative opponent of US deployment, the Arizona Republican, John McCain, had kind words for Mr Clinton, though he complained the President had failed to set out a clear "exit strategy" for the Nato force.

In fact, Mr Clinton merely repeated that the US mission would last no more than a year. He acknowledged that commitment of troops "would well involve casualties", for which he would take full responsibility. But the US force would be more than capable of looking after itself. Anyone who took them on would suffer the consequences, the President warned. "We will fight fire with fire. And then some."

Nato's final draft plan will be submitted to Mr Clinton this week. Assuming his approval, the White House will immediately thereafter seek the formal support of Congress. In the meantime between 500 and 700 US advance troops will go to Bosnia. The main contingent will arrive after formal signature of the peace accord in Paris in mid-December.

According to the CNN-USA Today poll, by a 53 to 40 per cent margin Americans believe the US has a "moral obligation" to help keep the peace. Brent Scowcroft, the former National Security Adviser in the Bush administration, told a Congressional committee that the possibility of disaster was "fairly high" but, he added, "I think disaster is absolutely certain if we turn our backs now".

Nato leaders agreed a deal with Russia two weeks ago which will enable Russian forces



A young Bosnian Muslim boy peers through razor wire at the Tuzla air base

Photograph: AP

Ministers forge Moscow's role in Nato

SARAH HELM
Brussels

William Perry, the US Defense Secretary, and Pavel Grachev were meeting at Nato headquarters in Brussels last night to discuss how to give Russia a degree of political control over the Nato-led force which is expected to head for the former Yugoslavia.

Nato leaders agreed a deal with Russia two weeks ago which will enable Russian forces

to serve alongside the Nato troops. However, the issue of political control of the force was deferred until the results of the peace conference at Dayton, Ohio were known.

The US has insisted that control should rest with the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which consists of Nato's 16 ambassadors and is the Alliance's main policymaking forum.

Washington has refused to consider granting any control to the United Nations - where Russia

holds a seat on the Security Council - arguing that a single command structure is of overriding importance.

Russia, however, wants a wider command system than Nato is suggesting, and the two sides were yesterday considering giving Russia a liaison role alongside the NAC.

Mr Perry suggested yesterday that one solution might be for Vitaly Churkin, Moscow's ambassador to Brussels, to take an advisory role at Nato head-

quarters during the peace enforcement operation. President Clinton is determined that the force should come under overall command of US generals, knowing that otherwise he might lose his battle to convince Congress to commit 20,000 US troops to the force.

"What we will be discussing is ways in which Russia can have a voice on the NAC without being on the NAC," said Mr Perry before beginning yesterday's discussion with the Russian

Defence Minister. "There are a number of ways of doing that and I hope we can find a formula by which they can participate."

A Russian general is to be attached to the US commander in charge of the operation, General George Joulwan.

But General Joulwan, who is also Nato's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, will consult on operations involving the Russians in his capacity as a US general.



The Independent is asking readers to support four charities working to help child victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia. Save the Children is focusing its efforts on children who have been separated from their families, counselling and reuniting them.

The Red Cross is running the largest humanitarian operation in the region, looking after refugee camps and linking people through its famous messaging network. War Child plans to build a £2.5m music therapy centre in Mostar, and to send urgently needed prosthetics to wounded children in the Tuzla area.

Child Advocacy International aims to bring up to 100 sick children to Britain for treatment they could not obtain at home.

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So far the Independent's appeal has raised £22,000 and led to a ventilator being donated to the Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo by the Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow.

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Egyptian elections: Campaign against Muslim Brotherhood has outraged liberals and embarrassed American government

Mubarak threatens to make victims into heroes

ROBERT FISK

Cairo

Is President Mubarak a frightened man? Given the mass arrests that have preceded today's Egyptian parliamentary elections, the police intimidation and the sentencing last week of 54 non-violent members of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the man who has ruled Egypt for almost a decade and a half no longer trusts his own electorate.

For what might have been a mundane election, won as usual by Mr Mubarak's acolytes in his National Democratic Party, has been transformed over the past few days into a battle between the government and those Egyptians who wish for a transition to a more Islamic state. By harassing the technically illegal but hitherto toler-

ated Muslim Brotherhood—who are fielding up to 150 candidates in the elections—the Mubarak government has outraged Egyptian liberals and deeply embarrassed an American government which has advocated human rights as the cornerstone of democracy in the Middle East.

Quite apart from last week's trials before Egyptian military courts in which 54 of 80 Muslim Brotherhood defendants—including doctors and lawyers, none of whom advocated violence—were sentenced to imprisonment and hard labour for "holding secret meetings and preparing anti-government meetings", Egyptian police have now arrested at least 400 Brotherhood supporters in Cairo. Many of them turn out to be Brotherhood "party agents", officially recognised witnesses who are allowed to observe

the voting at polling stations to ensure that the election is fair.

All have to submit their names and addresses to the authorities in advance of the poll. No sooner had they done so at the weekend, however, than the police arrested many of them. The government's action came only hours after a Brotherhood election rally in Cairo led by Mahmoud Odeh had been surrounded by the police—the organisers allegedly broke the law by using loudspeakers—who fired 400 supporters into trucks and took them away for temporary detention.

Officially, Egypt's parliamentary elections are not run on party lists. Candidates stand as independents and parties may endorse them as they see fit. Thus Mr Mubarak's NDP has endorsed 439 candidates in 444 constituencies—there are around 4,000 candidates in all

—while the Brotherhood are thought to have 150 candidates. As the semi-official *Al-Ahram* has pointed out, Mr Mubarak's men are going to win at least two-thirds of seats. So why the near-paranoid assault on those who were bound to lose—and at such cost to Egypt's boast that it is a democratic state?

One theory making the rounds in Cairo suggests that the President has been deeply troubled by Algeria's experience when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win parliamentary elections there in 1992, the military-backed regime suspended the poll to prevent what it claimed would be the creation of an Islamic Republic. The subsequent banning of the FIS led in a war in which 50,000 have died. Even if the Muslim Brotherhood may not be about to win the Egyptian elections, how much easier it

might be for President Mubarak to avoid claims of anti-democratic arrests after the election by accusing the Brotherhood now of attempting to subvert government authority.

Clearly, Mr Mubarak has good reason to be a worried man. The bomb attack on the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad last week, in which 15 diplomats and guards were killed, came only five months after an equally ruthless attempt to murder the President in Addis Ababa. In both cases, the armed Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility—and last week, it specifically named Mr Mubarak and his senior ministers as targets for future assassination. The Egyptian government was infuriated, not least because it had been bragging for months that its campaign against the armed Islamists had almost wiped out their enemies inside Egypt.

Unfortunately for Mr Mubarak, the Islamic Jihad again threatened the lives of foreigners and attacked two tourist trains in the Nile valley in upper Egypt. Even more ominously, last Thursday, the Egyptian police claimed they had arrested four men with a white Renault car containing 150 kilos of TNT in October 6th City outside Cairo. According to the police, the men intended to set off a car bomb in the Khan al-Khalili bazaar, a popular tourist attraction in Cairo.

So is President Mubarak striking at the soft underbelly of "terrorism" by harassing the Muslim Brotherhood, as he would like the world to believe? Or is he stifling the only semi-legitimate mouthpiece of those who oppose him and the corruption which has become so endemic a part of the Egyptian administration and bureaucracy?



Mubarak: Does he still trust his electorate?

debate... When they are seen as victims, this makes them heroes, even if they don't deserve being considered as heroes.

Although at least nine American human-rights groups condemned last week's military court convictions, the US embassy in Cairo—always a weather vane of Washington's approval or disapproval in Arab states—has remained silent.

Syria and Israel look like easing closer

PATRICK COCKBURN

Jerusalem

Are Israel and Syria slowly moving towards each other? Public diplomacy in Barcelona this week produced a less glacial tone than usual. Ehud Barak, the new Israeli Foreign Minister, speaking to his Syrian counterpart said: "We have been rivals on the battlefield, and shed the blood of our courageous soldiers, the finest sons of Israel and Syria. Let us now make peace."

Farouq al-Shaar, the Syrian Foreign Minister, summoned members of his delegation and left the room to consult about their reply. When he returned he said Syria offered "a full peace in return for full withdrawal" by Israel from the Golan Heights, captured in 1967. Mr Barak said the Syrian response contained "positive messages."

Such public diplomacy holds dangers. Both sides were on best behaviour in front of the media and leaders from 27 Mediterranean countries gathered in Barcelona. In particular, neither Israel nor Syria wants to offend Washington.

Assessment in Jerusalem is sombre. Dr Dore Gold, an expert on the negotiations with Syria at the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, says that neither the Syrian nor the Israeli positions have changed. He says,

nevertheless, it is important to see what changes, if any, Shimon Peres, the new prime minister, makes in the Israeli position.

Syria, which offered no condolences to Israel over the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, will be asking itself the same question. It will also want to know more about Mr Barak. Chief-of-Staff of the Israeli army at the beginning of the year, he had already entered the cabinet as Interior Minister when the assassination of Mr Rabin on 4 November made him Foreign Minister. "Is Barak going to be a loyal lieutenant to Peres to obtain the succession as prime minister or will he carve his own political and military viewpoint?" Dr Gold asks.

The difficulty is that far more is involved than the Golan Heights, though resolving their future is complex enough. Israel is willing to withdraw—though the position of a new frontier line is unclear. Also in dispute is the extent of the pullback of troops. Israel wants 24-hour-a-day monitoring from ground stations—notably that on top of Mount Hermon—to prevent a surprise attack.

Israel says it needs early warning because Syria has a large standing army while the Israeli forces depend on reserves. It also wants the Syrian army re-deployed away from the Golan, with only limited forces south of Damascus.

All this may be too much for



High hopes: Israel may be willing to withdraw from the Golan Heights, captured in 1967, but resolving their future is extremely complex

Photograph: Erica Lansner/Colorific

President Hafez al-Assad of Syria to swallow. He is being asked to make more concessions than at first appear. Professor Gold believes the recovery of the Golan only ranks third in Syria's priorities, its first concerns being its pre-dominance in Lebanon and relations with the US. Syria also knows that the pay-off for the US in arranging an agreement is to get Damascus to break with Iran. Washington's prime enemy and President Assad's closest ally in the Middle East.

There is another Syrian worry. Can Mr Peres deliver? His Labour Party has already split on the Golan. A vote in the

Knesset about a special majority for withdrawing was tied in the summer 59 votes to 59. This was with Mr Rabin as prime minister. Would a withdrawal be approved by the Knesset now and how would it be regarded by the Israeli electorate?

Marjayoun—Lebanese guerrillas fired Katyusha rockets on northern Israeli towns yesterday, wounding at least six people and forcing residents into bomb shelters, AP reports. Israel responded with artillery fire and an air raid on suspected strongholds of Hizbollah, the Iranian-backed guerrilla group that claimed responsibility for the rocket barrage.

Mediterranean trade deal clinched

ELIZABETH NASH

Barcelona

European and Mediterranean nations agreed an unprecedented common programme for peace and prosperity yesterday, promising to defuse conflict and promote trade throughout the region.

It remains unclear, however, to what extent these somewhat vague promises can be redeemed, especially the pledges to remove most trade barriers within 15 years.

Twenty-seven foreign ministers from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East ended the Euro-Mediterranean conference with an action plan promising a regional free-trade area by 2010 and co-operation on energy, water, immigration and drugs trafficking.

The Barcelona declaration fell short of what some nations had hoped for, but it marks an advance in uncharted diplomatic and commercial territo-

ry. It was being compared yesterday to the dialogue on security and co-operation which was established between former Cold War countries by the Helsinki agreement.

The core of the Barcelona pact is the proposed free trade zone, intended to promote the prosperity of North African and Middle Eastern countries, seen as indispensable to curbing illegal immigration. The free trade area is to be created by detailed agreements yet to be negotiated, between the EU and the Mediterranean countries, and among Mediterranean countries themselves.

The Mediterranean countries will progressively open up to European trade and investment in return for what the document calls "a substantial increase in the European Union's financial aid to its partners". The EU will supply \$1.2bn (£800m) in aid and credits to the region over the next four years.

In effect, the poorer countries on Europe's southern flank will accept increased dominance by their richer northern neighbours as the price for economic growth. Agriculture, the Mediterranean's main export industry, received a more relaxed treatment in the push towards free trade, in deference to Mediterranean countries' fears that they would be blown away by northern competition.

The conference is the start of a process of regular meetings and initiatives, and it is on these that its success will be judged. More meetings are planned next year, and another assembly of foreign ministers is envisaged for 1997, probably in a non-European capital.

Spain's Foreign Minister, Javier Solana, who chaired the conference, stressed that no subject remained in dispute. It was, he said, the first time countries with outstanding disputes had unanimously approved a common document.

Yesterday's declaration hedged around the question of terrorism and the scope of nuclear non-proliferation, matters of dispute between Israel and Syria that neither sought to resolve in Barcelona.

The conference will also be remembered as the occasion for the first ever public, and relatively positive, face-to-face exchanges between Syria and Israel. An Israeli spokesman said that the conference "could be a cornerstone to a new peace process".

The countries bordering the southern Mediterranean are the EU's third trading partner and supply 27 per cent of its energy. Europe represents two-thirds of the Mediterranean countries' trade. In addition, about 6 million North Africans live in Europe. So links are already strong. But Europe's richer northern countries feel the opportunities remain enormously underexploited, a point seized on by Britain.

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New Bond movie fails the dial-God test

DAVID USBORNE

New York

Go and see "Goldeneye", the new James Bond caper if you must, but avoid the latest crop of American mayhem movies such as *Martin Scorsese's "Casino"* and *"Money Train"* starring Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson. They will bankrupt your immortal soul.

This advice comes courtesy not of the regular film rating organisations but of the Catholic Church, which has jumped into the film reviewing business by way of a free telephone number

that is now available nationwide.

Dial the number and you are invited to listen to mini-reviews or "capsules" on six new releases showing in US cinemas. You will hear a rapid description of each film and critical assessment, with heavy emphasis on moral content. Each release then receives a rating ranging from A1 (general patronage) to A4 (for adults, with reservations). Films considered beyond the pale receive a simple "O" (morally offensive).

"Goldeneye", which may become the most successful Bond film ever in the US, apparent-

ly did not endear itself. The film "is all sound and fury to the detriment of character and storyline", they said, awarding it an A4 but sparing it the big "O".

However, Bond got off comparably lightly compared with some others. "Casino", starring Robert De Niro as a casino manager and Sharon Stone as his drugged-out wife, gets an instant "O" by the church, because of "much graphic violence, adulterous affairs, fleeting nudity, substance abuse and incessant rough language". "Money Train" was hit by controversy this week, when a

real-life torching of a subway token booth in New York was blamed as a carbon copy of one of the scenes in the film. Maybe those responsible should have dialed the Catholic Church. This Christmas offering also gets a "O" thanks to its "uncritical depiction of crime" and, by the way, "a bedroom scene". There were two positive recommendations yesterday. There is glowing praise for Disney's computer-animated "Toy Story", and also for that old family favourite: "Around the World in Eighty Days".

Quebec gets concessions from uneasy Canada

RANDALL PALMER
Reuters

Ottawa—Jean Chrétien, under pressure to prevent Canada from falling apart, has announced three measures aimed at stopping French-speaking Quebec from leaving the rest of the country.

The Prime Minister made his proposals on Monday night after suffering blistering attacks in Parliament and in the media for not moving soon after separatists came close to winning a referendum on 30 October.

"These three initiatives the government will undertake in the coming days are a tangible

give four regions a veto over any constitutional amendment—Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic region and the Western region—thus meeting Quebec's demand to regain a constitutional veto without granting that right to Quebec alone.

Thirdly, the government would begin decentralising some of its functions, starting with getting out of the business of manpower training. "This is just the start of a process of change, not the outcome. What is important is that changes be innovative and realistic and respect the will of Canadians."

The separatists came within a percentage point of winning last month's referendum. A poll in Saturday's *Globe and Mail* said 54.8 per cent of Quebecers would vote to leave Canada if a vote were held now.

Since the referendum, the Bloc's charismatic leader, Lucien Bouchard, has said he would seek the premiership of Quebec, from which he could launch another referendum in a couple of years. Rejecting Mr Chrétien's proposals outright, Quebec's Ms Beaudoin said the distinct-society resolution was "just words" giving Quebec no real power and the proposals on worker training fell short of demands made by earlier Quebec governments.

Reaction from Quebec's Liberal Party leader, Daniel Johnson, who was official leader of the referendum campaign, was reserved. Mr Johnson commended Mr Chrétien for taking a "first step" but added that a resolution adopted by Quebec Liberals on Sunday called for Quebec's distinct-society designation and veto to be entrenched in the constitution. That would give them much more political weight.

Mr Chrétien said government was introducing a motion in the Commons recognising Quebec as a distinct society with a French-speaking majority. A bill would be introduced to



Chrétien: Three measures to hold Canada together

response to the desires expressed by my fellow Quebecers during the referendum campaign," Mr Chrétien said. The proposals were immediately blasted by the Parti Québécois government in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois, its separatist ally in the federal parliament, and the western Reform Party as unacceptable. "What we have on the table is clearly not enough," Louise Beaudoin, Quebec's intergovernmental affairs minister, told a Montreal news conference.



Call of the open road: The US Congress has lifted the 55mph speed limit, imposed during the 1970s oil crisis, freeing states to set their own rules Photograph: Brian Harris

Revisit Highway 61 and put your foot down

Fed up with speed limits, and your inability to discover whether that snappy new roadster really does 110 mph? Well, drivers of the world, very soon you will have two places in which put such manufacturers' claims to the test, legally. One of course remains the autobahns of Germany. The other (much more scenic) will shortly be the great state of Montana, occupying an area greater than Germany but with one hundredth the population.

For this notable addition to the sum of human liberties, thank the US Congress which last week finally voted to do away with the 55mph federal speed limit. In its place, individual states will be free to set their own rules. And in the Big Sky Country, the sky will indeed be the limit. Tune those Cadillacs and Cherokees, Saabs and Jags and head for the Northern Plains, where an unspecified

"reasonable and prudent speed" will be the only constraint upon your pleasure.

Thus ends a great American anachronism, imposed back in 1974 to reduce oil consumption, when people made jokes about "Sheikh Yamani or Your Life". Opec threatened an embargo and queues at petrol stations stretched for blocks.

These days oil prices are tumbling, and even Saudi Arabia is strapped for cash, while America guzzles imported oil with more abandon than ever. But in theory the country still chugs along at 55mph, except in rural areas where on major highways the limit was put up to 65 mph in 1987.

The operative words, of course, are "in theory". In my experience (and I speak as one who has co-existed with French, Italian, German and Russian drivers for some 20 years) Americans are pretty sensible behind the

WASHINGTON DAYS

wheel. But 55mph usually means 60 or 65 in practice, and in 65mph zones you can drive at 75—or undergo the humiliating and quite terrifying experience of being tailgated by a 40-ton trailer truck, headlights flashing as it demands its God-given right to intimidate every other vehicle on the road. If, as has been calculated, only one in 10 drivers respects the limits, the reason is not ingrained national lawlessness, it is simply the fact that, over America's huge distances in the late 20th century, a 55mph speed limit is nonsense.

Cars are far safer and so much better engineered now that dutiful observance of the law can be tedious to the point of danger. Almost all American cars are automatic, add unchanging landscapes and

"cruise control", whereby you press a button to hold the car at a constant speed, and all too easily "virtual" driving can turn into real sleep.

Not surprisingly, the opposition to limits has always been strongest in the West where the distances are vast, the people few and dislike of federal government all-abiding. In crowded Eastern states, three speeding tickets can cost you your licence. Montana has a standard speeding fine of \$5, or £3, which it officially describes as an "energy conservation ticket", the Big Sky Country's mocking obeisance to Sheikh Yamani and his ilk. In Nevada too, which plans to raise its limit to 75mph, there's no puff about "reckless endangerment"—just the vague offence of a "waste of natural re-

sources", and a \$15 fine. All in all, a dozen states have said they will either scrap or raise the limit to 70 or 75mph.

Conceivably of course President Bill Clinton could try to spoil the fun. He is known to favour retaining the current limits, not least because his own father died in a road crash before he was born, probably as a result of driving too fast in bad weather. But the repeal went through the House on the nod, and the Senate by 80 votes to 16, suggesting that a White House veto would be overruled in the flash of a passing Montana pick-up truck.

And consider the subject performance of the lobbyists. Normally, on an issue such as speed limits, public safety and medical groups would be having a field day, with righteous press conferences, saturation advertising and zealous "call-your-Congressman" campaigns. But, as-

tonishingly, all has fallen on deaf ears. Perhaps the campaigners have gone too far, and a country that lives by numbers has finally said enough to bombardment by dubious statistics.

The consumer protection guru, Ralph Nader, may warn of 6,400 more deaths and \$19bn a year in extra public health and related costs; but why not \$5bn, \$10bn, or \$30bn, and 2,000, 8,000 or 10,000 more lives lost (on top of the 45,000 who currently die in road accidents every year)?

The answer is, no one knows. More to the point, a federal speed limit runs full square against today's doctrine of handing responsibility back to the states. The public has simply had enough and so, I confess, have I—but with one proviso. Please put the brakes on those hellish trucks.

Rupert Cornwell

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Clinton shows true leadership

From a European perspective, President Bill Clinton's speech on Bosnia last Monday night rates as perhaps his finest foreign policy address in three years of office. His language was precise, his message was unmistakable. By the time he finished, he had succeeded in setting out not just a compelling case for sending US troops to Bosnia, but a convincing definition of long-term American interests in Europe. Senior Republicans in Congress, notably Senator Robert Dole, Mr Clinton's potential rival in next year's presidential election, were right to give a positive response to the speech and to suggest that they would no longer oppose the deployment of US soldiers in the Balkans.

The chief virtue of Mr Clinton's speech was that it recognised how much is at stake for the United States in Bosnia. It is not just a matter of the need to implement the peace agreement recently negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, though clearly the Clinton administration, having urged each side in the war to make a number of painful concessions, has a responsibility not to walk away and let the settlement unravel. The most important point made by Mr Clinton was that the Bosnian conflict, if left to fester, could "spread like poison throughout the region and eat away at Europe's stability and erode our partnership with our European allies".

The wars of the Yugoslav succession have placed this partnership under considerable strain in the past four years. The European Union, eager to prove its maturity in foreign policy and security matters, promised the US in 1991 that it would sort

out the mess in former Yugoslavia, and then failed to do so. At the same time, there were justified European complaints that the US was doing just enough to undermine European peace initiatives in the Balkans without committing the full resources of its diplomatic and military strength to a solution of the Yugoslav problem.

By late last year, mutual recriminations between the US and Europe had left NATO more divided than at any time since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was vital to inject the alliance with a fresh sense of purpose, without which it might as well sink into post-Cold War obsolescence. Thankfully, the Western allies summoned the will last summer to do just that, and a short but effective bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs was followed by a determined effort to broker a definitive peace settlement before the end of this year. US leadership, however late in the day it arrived, proved absolutely essential during this period, but Mr Clinton was right to point out that all the hard work will come to nothing if the US pulls out now.

The coming 12 months will offer the US and Europe a chance to show that they can co-operate effectively in stabilising a part of the world that is notoriously treacherous for peace-makers. Setbacks can be expected, for the Ohio settlement leaves Serbs, Croats and Muslims alike dissatisfied in several important respects. However if one thing is certain it is that Bosnia would be an even more dangerous place without the presence of a US-led NATO force. Mr Clinton deserves praise for spelling that out.

Welcome to the world of Jesus plc

How endearingly behind the times we can always rely on the Church of England to be. After almost a decade of turmoil in bodies such as the BBC and the NHS, in which efficiency became the new watchword, the Church of England has finally decided to get in on the act and launch its own Birtist revolution.

The Turnbull report into church governance, which the General Synod will discuss this week, addresses some real problems. There is no doubt of that. The Church Commissioners, under the hapless Sir Douglas Lovejoy, lost £80m – a third of church funds – in the late Eighties through their unseemly foray into property speculation. And the Synod, with its hundred or so sub-committees, has laid itself open to uncharitable caricature in recent years with its endless successions of worthy motions reminiscent of a students' union in the early Seventies.

So is the report of the group chaired by the Bishop of Durham, Michael Turnbull, the answer? What it proposes is a national council, chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury, which would set budgets, oversee the flow of money within the church, develop a comprehensive pensions policy and decide how many priests are needed. The whole top layer of the Synod will disappear.

Its critics are clear what this would mean. Trying to squeeze the church into the mould of a managed, product-driven organisation would bring about the "McDonaldisation" of religion – seeking

ever greater uniformity, predictability and control. They accuse the hierarchy of repeating mistakes by absorbing the values of its elite peer group and bringing in out-of-date management theories. Welcome to the wonderful world of Jesus plc.

The outside world tends to think of the Church of England as an organisation whereas, cynics might say, it is in reality a coalition of interests held together in an armed neutrality. More sympathetically, one might suggest that it is an organisation which needs to nurture its corporate spirituality as much as its managerial efficiency.

The problem with the Turnbull proposals is that they set out to address the issue of accountability and end up with an unelected council that is accountable only to the church's own bureaucracy. The risk to the morale of the working clergy is clear. The church must find ways of becoming more efficient and which invigorate its rank and file rather than buttressing the power of the hierarchy.

That means a rethink rather than proceeding now with unseemly haste to a leisurely repentance. After all, the most successfully centrally-managed church around is that which has its corporate headquarters in Rome. The cost of such efficiency – both in the shadowy scandals that have in the past surrounded the unaccountable Vatican finances, and in the authoritarian hammering of dissenters – has been high indeed.

Church put too much faith in commercialism

From *The Reverend William Paley*: Sir: One important lesson the Church of England might learn from recent events surrounding the Nine O'clock Service in Sheffield is that the adoption by church authorities of commercial criteria and business methods has its dangers. The Bishop of Sheffield and the two archdeacons interviewed in the *Evening* television programme on Sunday clearly welcomed the NOS as successful. It satisfied consumer demand and filled the building. A recent church advertising campaign suggested that "Come to Church" is what the message of Christmas is all about. If so, the NOS was clearly performing well. Furthermore, the refusal of ecclesiastical authorities to take responsibility for what happened is breathtaking. The bishop claimed he could not know what was going on in every corner of his diocese. This was a movement at the centre of his small diocese, which he positively encouraged in many ways. But why should we expect a bishop to take responsibility for

such things, when the Home Secretary adopts an even more flagrant attitude to his episcopate? Yours faithfully, WILLIAM PALEY Oxford 27 November

From *Mr Julian Cummings*: Sir: Bryan Appleyard's ("A church in psychedelic chaos", 28 November) is right to place the Nine O'clock Service in the context of the church's decline. He is wrong to suggest that the "bourgeois backwoods" is the only alternative. On Wednesday, General Synod debates the Turnbull Report, proposing at long last a modern, efficient and theologically appropriate structure for the church. Turnbull offers a means by which the spiritual can not only flourish, but flourish without the excesses seen in Sheffield.

Mystics have known from the early centuries that discipline and structure are indispensable in handling things that are deep and powerful; Turnbull offers such a structure. The most appropriate response that Synod can make to

the widespread concern over both Chris Brain and the church's continuing decline is to endorse Turnbull, and endorse an early timetable for its implementation. Yours sincerely, JULIAN CUMMINGS Leeds 28 November

From *Mr Nicolas Walter*: Sir: Bryan Appleyard's attack on the Church of England (28 November) attempts to distinguish between "fundamentalist evangelism" and "New Ageism", but things are not so simple. Both kinds of religion existed in Christianity from the start and have appeared in many revivalist movements since, even in the Church of England. A more important point is that both involve the search for certainty and meaning beyond this life in this world and the abandonment of rational and pragmatic thought in favour of faith. Yours sincerely, NICOLAS WALTER Rationalist Press Association London, N1

Fast forward on asylum cases

From *Ms Ann Widdecombe*: Sir: May I clear up the confusion apparent in the report "Howard names 'white list'" (24 November) by Heather Mills? The short procedure we have been piloting since May simply involves giving asylum applicants an early interview and a deadline for submitting any additional representations. We aim to decide the claim normally within five weeks, compared with the current average of over eight months for a new claim. We are expanding our capacity to handle cases in this way, and the range of nationalities included. In due course we envisage applying the short procedure to most straightforward asylum claims. In developing the procedure, we have acted openly throughout. The short procedure does not require legislation or affect appeal rights. Designation of countries where there is, in general, no serious risk of persecution will require new powers, which we shall bring forward under the Asylum and Immigration Bill. There will, in effect, be a rebuttable presumption against claims from design-

nated countries, although they will still be considered and asylum granted in exceptional cases. An accelerated appeal procedure will apply. Designation orders will have to be laid before Parliament. The Home Secretary will announce likely candidates for designation at an early stage during the Bill's passage.

The distinction between designation and the short procedure was clearly signalled in the Home Office letter from which Ms Mills selectively quoted. The short procedure will not be limited to designated countries. It is vital that we take action to stem the growing number of underserving asylum seekers coming to this country, who are currently costing the taxpayer over £200m per year in benefits alone. Any government that dangled this issue would surely not be worth its salt. Yours faithfully, ANN WIDDECOMBE Minister of State Home Office London, SW1 27 November

In a muddle over Rupert Bear

From *Mr Victor Watson*: Sir: The opening paragraph of David Brazier's article about Rupert Bear (Rupert loses his bearings", 24 November), which links the decline of the economy and the British Empire, the low esteem of politicians and the collapse of the Royal Family with Rupert's loss of faith in "law-abiding upright behaviour", was a model of muddled thinking. Poor Rupert – "the last standard-bearer of public decency and civil conduct is falling prey to the malaise of our times". Brazier's central point derives from a comparison of Alfred Bestall's wartime Rupert annuals with those of today. A fictional character who has endured for almost 80 years will inevitably change. The culture of the Thirties and Forties is not the culture of the Nineties, and the readers of that time are not the same as the readers of today.

Some of these changes are for the better: I notice that Mr Brazier has nothing to say about the unacceptable race stereotypes that no longer appear in Rupert annuals. The astonishing thing is that Rupert has changed so little. He still combines two almost impossible ideals: a child's ideal of perfect freedom in an expanding but ultimately safe imaginative world, and an adult's ideal of perfect child behaviour. Rupert is to children what they would like to be, and he is to parents what they would like their children to become.

Mr Brazier reserves his most



Rupert helps a space traveller

Express Newspapers

ferocious criticism for a story in which Rupert assists some stranded space-travellers. He contemptuously complains that "the only principle here seems to be that we should be kind to aliens in trouble". Try saying that to today's very young readers, David Brazier, and you would find that, in their developing moral awareness, they would tell you we should be kind to aliens if we meet any.

I suspect that Mr Brazier has got hold of a couple of Forties annuals and compared them with a few recent issues. If he had looked more closely, he would have seen that even in the early annuals stories of villainy are considerably outnumbered by stories in which something has just gone wrong and Rupert helps to put it right. For very young

children, at the centre of their reading is the idea of Rupert as a helper.

None of this silliness would matter if it were not for the fact that the serious subtext of his article is really to do with punishment. Brazier is critical of the contemporary Rupert because his moral condemnation "is reserved for 'institutional crime' that society visits upon itself, such as pollution", and he accuses him of being like church leaders who "studiously avoid censure of the activities of lawless individuals". Brazier is not really interested in Rupert at all; he might be more at home with Noddy. Yours sincerely, VICTOR WATSON Homerton College Cambridge 27 November

Incentives for inventiveness

From *Dr Trevor M. Jones*: Sir: Kevin Watkins ("Whose property is life?", 20 November) is right to highlight the question of genetic engineering as one for public debate. But it should not be confused, as Mr Watkins seems to do, with the issue of patenting biological inventions. A patent merely enables a patentee to limit unauthorised commercial use of a product or process – it neither permits commercialisation of the invention nor confers rights of ownership. Any controls which society deems necessary should not be applied to inventions or developments only through the patent law.

For these reasons, restricting patentability through European law's "morality" clause is both unnecessary and inappropriate. Not only is the term imprecise and arbitrary, but it is surely immoral not to encourage inventions which have the potential to alleviate human suffering. The next revolutions in alleviating human suffering, through conquering diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's and cystic fibrosis, will be the result of biotechnological or genetic research.

The pharmaceutical industry needs to be able to explore such exciting possibilities. It can only do this if there is an effective patent system in place to encourage it to maintain its multi-million pound investment into the research and development of new medicines. Yours sincerely, TREVOR M. JONES Director-General Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry London, SW1 21 November

At the heart of healthy eating

From *Mr John Newman*: Sir: In presenting the introduction of low-fat foods as some kind of marketing gimmick ("Too good to be true?", 24 November), Sarah Edgill has ignored one of the main drivers of this trend – namely the Government's Health of the Nation target to reduce total fat consumption to 35 per cent of energy intake.

The target was set because of the overriding need to reduce the incidence of premature death from coronary heart disease, and the medical evidence pointed to a reduction in fat consumption, together with other measures such as giving up smoking and increasing exercise as the best means of reversing this trend. Manufacturers have made a positive response by offering the reduced- and low-fat foods described. Yours faithfully, JOHN NEWMAN Director British Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance London, WC2 24 November

Steroid squeeze

From *Dr S. Malik*: Sir: Jim White is wrong to propagate the myth that body-builders have "fuller G-strings" ("Running on the road to nowhere", 25 November). Now that many body-builders (allegedly) take anabolic steroids, side effects dictate that the reverse is often true – the fullness of their G-strings leaves much to be desired. Yours faithfully, S. MALIK Fulwood, South Yorkshire 26 November

French lesson

From *Mr Donald Foreman*: Sir: Mary Dejevsky ("Warning of new French revolution", 25 November) makes it clear that republican France is not a country at ease with itself. For almost 100 years after the revolution of 1789, France was a monarchy of one form or another, and since the fall of the Second Empire the three republican constitutions have conspicuously failed to unite the nation. Periods when the executive president, who is also head of state, has been of one party while the prime minister is of another have only served to inhibit good government and emphasise division. Let us not forget that Jacques Chirac was not the people's choice in the first round of the last presidential election.

While even the most ardent monarchist would not predict restoration of a French monarchy, an opinion poll conducted on the bicentenary of the revolution resulted in almost 30 per cent actively favouring such a move, and a majority who would not object to it. Monarchist groups representing the Bourbon, Orleans and Bonaparte dynasties are present throughout France, and receive a great deal of support.

Republicanism has not provided a solution to France's ills, and those who believe a move from monarchy to republic in Britain, or elsewhere, would be an advantage are much mistaken. Yours faithfully, DONALD FOREMAN Secretary-General Monarchist League London, WC1 27 November

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk).

Clichés aren't what they used to be

There's a story called "William the Intruder" by the great Richard Crompton which starts, as many of the William stories do, with elder brother Robert falling hopelessly in love with a girl. The opening dialogue between William and Robert about the girl has always appealed to me. It goes like this: "She's different from everybody else in the world," stammered Robert ecstatically. "You simply couldn't describe her. No one could!"

His mother continued to darn his socks and made no comment. Only William, his younger brother, showed interest.

"How's she different from anyone else?" he demanded. "Is she blind or lame or something?"

Robert turned on him with exasperation. "Oh, go and play at trains!" he said. "A child like you can't understand anything."

Now, the reason Robert got cross with William was not because William was being stupid or obtuse. It was because William was being intelligent. He was actually listening to what Robert was saying and reacting to the meaning of the words. This girl was different from everyone else, was she? Therefore she must have some amazing physical characteristic. It stands to reason.

But Robert didn't mean that at all. All he meant was that he was smitten.



MILES KINGSTON

If Robert had thought about what he was saying, he would have noticed that every time he fell in love, he described the girl as the most wonderful girl in the world, and a moment's thought might have told him that they couldn't all be. In fact, only one could be. But grown-ups don't think about what they are saying most of the time. They use bolt-on sentences to make conversation, automatic phrases that spring to mind like trusted ticks which whizz guitarists fall back on.

Here's an example. If people want to describe somebody as ultra-conservative, they don't call him ultra-conservative. They say that he is somewhere to the right of ... anyone? That's right! Somewhere to the right of Genghis Khan. Never to the right of Attila the Hun or Tamburlaine the Great, always Genghis Khan. Genghis Khan has now replaced Disgusted of

Tunbridge Wells as a right-wing figure. And it was always Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells, never of Weston-super-Mare or Eastbourne. That's because grown-ups don't think about what they are saying. They just react to the other person, and bolt a phrase on to what he has just said.

(How about a composite right-wing figure called Disgusted of Mongolia?)

Here's another example. If people attack the monarchy from a republican viewpoint, the inevitable answer used to be that the monarchy couldn't answer back so it wasn't fair to criticise them. That no longer holds water. If the royals want to defend themselves they can now go on television with Jonathan Dimbleby or Martin Bashir and defend themselves till the cows come home or the sets are switched off. So a new cliché is sought, and it has been found. When republicans attack the monarchy, the answer often is:

"If you get rid of the Queen, who are you going to have as president? Roy Hattersley?"

I have heard this several times on the radio. It's a silly answer, not because Roy Hattersley would be a bad president, but because if we did have a president, nobody would know or care much who he or she was. The Germans have a president. Hands up who knows his name. Nobody? Me neither. When a politician goes on the

media and announces some reform, nobody ever asks him if it is a good or bad reform; they always ask him: "Where are you going to find the money to finance it?"

When someone is asked how he is going to vote in the next election, he or she almost always prefaces the answer with the introductory phrase: "Well, I think I have voted for all the main parties in my time ..."

When the subject of American humour is raised, someone will say, sooner or later: "Of course, the Americans have no sense of irony."

When someone is required to answer criticisms, he will almost always say: "Well, we do get a lot of flak, but we get a lot of congratulations as well, so I think that shows we are getting it about right."

When a politician is being asked a question by the other side in Parliament, he hates answering it – he would much rather use the formula: "Well, that comes well from the honourable member considering that ...", and then there is a choice of formulae from "considering that in 1988 he said, and I quote ... to 'considering that he belongs to a party which, when last in office, actually passed legislation ..."

And if anyone notices these clichés, they promptly use another cliché to describe it. Here it is. If I had a pound for every time I've heard that phrase ...

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Tough balancing act at Severn

Like its peers in the water supply industry, Severn Trent is finding it hard to maintain an acceptable balance between its customers and shareholders. The group has done a reasonable job for the latter since privatisation in 1989, producing rising earnings and dividends. But increasing resentment at the soaring prices suffered by its customers to finance a massive capital investment programme worth £2bn over five years has boiled over this year.

The political furor that led to the widespread announcement in the industry of "benefit-sharing" packages, involving rebates to customers and special dividends, has been made all the more embarrassing by the drought.

The resulting hopelessness and its continuation into what is normally thought of as winter has forced Severn Trent to announce a £130m top-up to its spending schedule. The problem for Severn is that keeping a clamp on costs to keep shareholders happy has left it unable to cope with the exceptional conditions of the past summer.

The measures unveiled yesterday will see £40m invested in increasing supplies, an increase of £10m to £25m a year for five years on stopping leaks and a further £40m put into improving local distribution networks. The hope is that the latest increases should prevent a repeat of this year's red faces and prove only a blip in the progressive reduction of debt. As importantly, the moves could help head off political and regulatory attempts to limit profits.

The drought aside, the group has continued to produce the goods in its main water and sewerage business. The underlying increase of one-eighth in operating profits, ignoring last year's £55m exceptional charge, takes the half-year total of £206m to the same level as for the whole of 1991. Ahead of £6.7m spent on drought-related work, direct operating costs rose only 1.4 per cent as the effects of last year's restructuring started to feed through.

The picture elsewhere is less inspiring. The £212m paid in 1991 for Biffa, the waste company that remains Severn's main diversification, still looks too high. Operating profits rose 34 per cent to £10.2m, but the waste arm remains several million pounds shy of breaking even after financing charges. Other businesses saw their contribution fall from £2.1m to £700,000, suggesting that Severn still has a long way to go in diversifying away from its heavily regulated core operations.

Full-year profits of £370m would put

the shares at 679p, up 11p, on a lowly forward rating of below 8. With a prospective yield of 5.9 per cent they might be thought to be fully discounting the political uncertainty, but the risks until the election remain sizeable.

Morland stays ahead of rivals

Morland has been a remarkable success since the beer orders turned the industry upside-down six years ago and full-year profits up a useful 11 per cent in the 12 months to September continued the good news. Over the past five years the company has consistently outperformed the other regional brewers in earnings and dividend growth.

After a 10 per cent increase in sales to £62.6m, pre-tax profits before exceptional property disposals were £11.02m (£9.96m). Earnings per share, up 9 per cent to 35.7p, allowed a 12 per cent jump in the full-year dividend payout to 11.5p, 2.6 times covered.

How has Morland achieved this in an industry otherwise troubled by flagging sales, rising costs and squeezed

margins? First it is small enough to be able to grow despite a stagnant market as a whole. It is well managed, has a sensible strategy for growth and a good track record of implementing it.

Although Morland is best known for Old Speckled Hen, its highly successful beer brand, brewing actually contributes less than one-fifth of profits and with margins being squeezed and a higher proportion of sales going through lower-margin free-trade and off-sales outlets that percentage will decline further. That said, reducing the brewery's dependence on its tied estate and focusing on a handful of high-margin brands was the right strategic move.

The rest of Morland's profits come from tenancies and managed pubs, with the latter growing fast as the company adapts new concepts from its larger rivals such as Whitbread - profits in managed pubs rose 30 per cent in the period. Tenancies do not have the same growth potential but they provide a good steady wholesale business for the brewing arm and generate significant amounts of cash. Volumes during the year held up much better than the market as a whole, which slipped 5 per cent.

Overall, Morland is in good shape, with negligible gearing, and steady

growth pencilled in. Profits before tax next year of more than £14m put the shares, up 3p to 520p, on a prospective price/earnings ratio of about 13. After the underperformance of the past three years, they are good value.

Norcross creeps back into black

Norcros, the troubled former mini-conglomerate, has hacked off so many limbs in the past few years that what remains is barely recognisable. The latest disposals, five building materials businesses, have raised a further £51.4m.

The print and packaging division, specialising in labels for supermarkets and the Underground tickets that include the "clever" magnetic stripe, is the next on the list. This will leave Norcros with just its ceramics division, including the Triton shower business, and the focus will be complete.

As an investment, however, Norcros has been an unmitigated disaster. After trading at over 400p in 1988 the shares have plummeted to just 75p yesterday, down 3p on the day, but the outlook is starting to look encouraging. Yesterday's results showed a return to the black with pre-tax profits of £18.7m in the six months to September compared with last year's £9m profit and the full year's £51m loss. Gearing is down to 37 per cent compared with nearly 80 per cent in March and the plan is to sweat the group's assets, boosted by £5m of cost-cutting announced in June.

After considering a merger or flotation of its print and packaging business, a sale now looks most likely. Analysts suggest a price tag of £100m. The company said yesterday that it was in talks with several interested parties.

The timing is hardly perfect as margin pressures have forced many print and packaging groups to issue profits warnings. But Norcros management, led by Michael Doherty, is confident that a decent price can be achieved and that a fair balance of the proceeds can be distributed to shareholders.

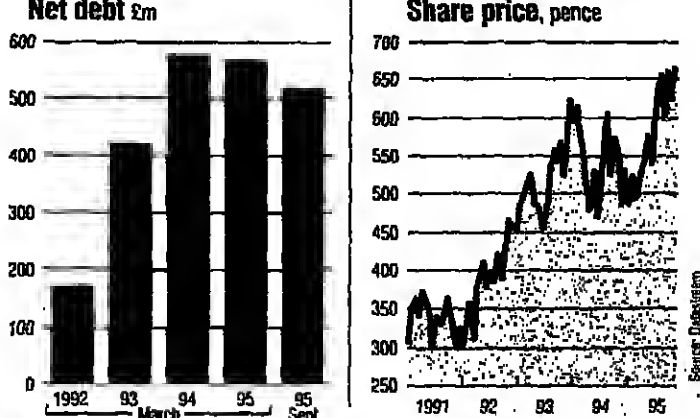
Analysts are forecasting pre-exceptional profits of £15m for the full year, which puts the stock on a forward rating of 12. That's reasonable given the recovery potential and the possibility of a takeover if management fails to deliver growth.

Severn Trent: at a glance

Market value: £2.49bn, share price 679p

Trading record	1993	1994	1995	1994	1995
Turnover (£m)	905	999	1,076	534	569
Pre-tax profits (£m)	270	281	268	108	189
Earnings per share (pence)	59.9	72.7	86.0	27.7	45.3
Dividends per share (pence)	21.1	22.8	28.9	8.23	9.20*

*including special payment of 3.4p



SKB chief housed at Grosvenor

DAVID HELLIER

Jan Leschly, the chief executive of SmithKline Beecham, spent nearly five months last year at one of the Grosvenor House Hotel's luxury £44,000-a-year apartments as he prepared to relocate to the US.

Mr Leschly listed apartment 138, 86-90 Park Lane, which is owned by Forte, as his usual residential address in the 1995 SKB annual return.

Built in the heart of Mayfair between 1927 and 1929, each

apartment offers a suite of spacious rooms and access to all the luxury facilities available to hotel guests. Beecham used to keep three apartments at the Grosvenor House Hotel and SKB has kept one since the two groups merged.

SmithKline says Mr Leschly stayed in apartment 138, described as the company's corporate apartment, from 26 August 1994 until 10 January 1995 after selling his residence in Marlow, Buckinghamshire. A spokesman said he did

not have exclusive use of the apartment at the time and added that he made a personal contribution to the costs that was assessed and approved by the company's accountants. "He used it as a home address and paid rent accordingly," a company spokesman said.

Mr Leschly, a former Wimbledon semi-finalist, was paid £2.47m in 1994 in salary and bonus compared with £1.9m in the previous year. This included an amount, said to be £800,000, for relocation expenses. In addition, he made a paper profit on his share options of more than £650,000.

Mr Leschly, who joined the company as chairman of pharmaceuticals in June 1990, now lists as his address a two-storey home in Hopewell, New Jersey, the value of which is assessed at about £875,000. He relocated last year. He bought the home before moving to the UK.

A company spokesman said the payment he received was to compensate for losses incurred on the sale of his UK home.



Jan Leschly: spent five months in luxury apartment

Euromoney profits fall 25%

NIGEL COPE

Euromoney Publications, the specialist magazine publisher, shares in which fell by a quarter after a profits warning last month, has reported a 25 per cent fall in profits to £18.2m for the year to September.

The company had warned of the fall, causing the shares to plunge by more than 300p last month, bringing to an end one of the most impressive success stories in the publishing sector in recent years.

Euromoney blamed losses in

new offices in Frankfurt, Paris and Jakarta as well as disappointing attendances at its seminars. The Mexican peso crisis had hit the businesses in the emerging markets while the Barings crisis and the consolidation in the bank sector also held back demand for training courses, exhibitions and seminars.

The company said it expected to recover from the setback and that the rationalisation at the AIC conference division was continuing. This includes job cuts and the closure of the

Amsterdam office. Euromoney has been building its stake in AIC and holds 70 per cent of the group, which accounts for more than half of group sales.

However, it is a lower-margin business susceptible to lower sales.

While attendances at the divisions main conferences have been maintained, seminar attendances have been lower and some have had to be cancelled.

The group's magazines and other businesses remained strong, it said. The dividend was increased from 42.5p to 43.5p.

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IN BRIEF

Amstrad warns of slow trading

Alan Sugar, chairman of Amstrad, warned that the company's results would be significantly weighted towards the second half due to a late start to production at Dancall, the group's mobile phone division. He also said that the group's Amstrad Consumer Electronics business was finding the going tough, particularly in Germany. Mr Sugar said the group was continuing to look for acquisition opportunities.

Crabtree plans £21m acquisition

Crabtree, the engineering group, is expanding in the US with the proposed £21m acquisition of Oven Systems, a Milwaukee-based manufacturer of ovens, washers and dryers. The acquisition will be funded by a placing and open offer priced at 352p per share to raise £17m. Crabtree also announced a 19 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £4.9m for the year to September.

US clears Zeneca heart drug

Zeneca drugs group has received clearance for its Zestril heart drug in the United States for the early treatment of heart attacks. Other countries are expected to grant clearance for the drug in the next few months, Zeneca said.

Smiths up-beat on prospects

Smiths Industries, the defence to medical products group, issued an up-beat trading update at the company's annual meeting. Roger Hurn, chairman, said that trading in the first quarter was encouraging in the medical sector. The aerospace industry also showed signs of better times to come as several airlines returned to profitability. However, he added that staff at Boeing, the group's largest customer for civil avionics, were still on strike.

ED & F Man profits sag to £33m

ED & F Man, the commodities trader, saw pre-tax profits fall almost 4 per cent to £32.8m in the first half. A strong performance from the sugar unit was offset by reduced contributions from other agricultural products. In financial services, the brokerage business was only slightly down on last year despite lower trading volumes. The interim dividend was maintained at 3.2p.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Euromoney Publications (F)	112m (89.3m)	18.2m (24.1m)	49.87p (59.35p)	43.5p (42.5p)
Norcros (F)	182m (184m)	18.7m (8.9m)	9.9p (2.3p)	nil (2.5p)
Crabtree Group (F)	32.8m (27.1m)	4.9m (4.11m)	21.6p (18.5p)	5p (5p)
Warfield (F)	62.8m (57.1m)	10.7m (9.7m)	33.5p (31.5p)	11.7p (10.7p)
ED&F Man (F)	117.4m (110m)	32.8m (34.1m)	8.5p (10.4p)	3.2p (3.2p)
Severn Trent (F)	508m (504m)	188m (108m)	45.3p (43p)	9.2p (8.23p)
ConocoPhillips (F)	142m (128m)	11.3m (10.2m)	14.4p (12.73p)	6.51p (6.15p)
Am. Street Brewery (F)	39.5m (38.1m)	3.26m (3.68m)	19.12p (21.53p)	5p (5p)
Maplewood Estates (F)	7.71m (8.06m)	3.55m (4.8m)	52.4p (71.9p)	12p (12p)

(F) = Final (Q) = Interim (M) = Nine months

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FT-SE 100
3,648.8 - 0.2

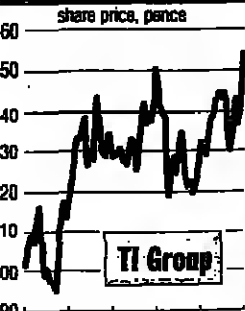
FT-SE 250
3,941.7 - 2.6

FT-SE 350
1,807.1 - 0.3

SEAQ VOLUME
79.5m shares,
27,917 bargains

Gifts Index
95.09 - 0.35

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Abbey National shines as investors sit on the sidelines

TAKING STOCK

Abbey National was the Budget day star. Even before the Chancellor launched his commentary on the economy, the shares of the former building society were up 13p to 618p, compared with the 130p flotation price of six years ago.

A sudden rush of analytical support spurred the gain. Panmure Gordon said buy and UBS switched from sell to hold. James Capel was positive.

The planned flotation of Halifax Building Society was one factor behind the Abbey support operation. Initially, Halifax, which will be an automatic FT-SE 100 constituent, will be dominated by private shareholders.

Until they sell, institutions will scamper hopefully for shares prompting many, until their demand is satisfied, to regard Abbey as a "proxy" for Halifax.

The stock market spent much of the day waiting for the

Chancellor and although his measures met most expectations there were worries in some quarters that he had, perhaps inadvertently, put the brake on the seemingly inexorable share advance.

At the close, the FT-SE 100 index was little changed at 3,648.8 with a relapse in New York causing some unease.

Trading, not surprisingly, was thin, with most investors, big and small, prepared to sit on the sidelines. The turnover figure was inflated by a succession of bed-and-breakfast deals and the reporting of delayed trades.

Drink shares celebrated Mr Clarke's relaxed approach. Bass and Scottish & Newcastle were strong among the brewers, and spirit groups moved ahead, with Guinness up 9p to 469p. Cider makers, however, felt the impact of the higher tax on strong cider, with H.P. Bulmer off 9p at 484p.



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

and Matthew Clark (the Gayer and Taunton group) lowered 21p to 626p.

The absence of the rumoured "windfall" tax helped utilities, with London Electricity leading the way with a 13p gain to 923p.

British Aerospace crossed 800p - climbing 12p to 801p - on a growing conviction that it is on the verge of clinching a big contract with the United Arab Emirates.

Rolls-Royce, a beneficiary of any such deal, jumped 6p to 175.5p, achieving the best gain of any blue chip.

TI, the engineer, felt the benefit of a Capel recommendation, gaining 12p to 453p.

The stockbroker nudged up next year's forecast by £2m to £212m and the following year from £223m to £250m.

Insurances were weak, with Société Générale Strauss Turbunb caution doing much of the damage.

The securities house advised selling Sun Alliance and said GRE was overvalued. Sun fell 6p to 392p (after 386p) but GRE, where BAT Industries is seen as the most likely bidder, was firm at 264p.

Charter, the conglomerate, was little changed at 805p after a lunch at Henderson Crosthwaite. Henderson is keen on Charter and also recommends BTR and Wassall.

Pilkington, the glass group, was heavily traded. The shares rose 4.5p to 194p.

Amstrad, the electronic group, had a difficult session following cautious comments from chairman Alan Sugar. The shares fell 16.5p to 266.5p.

London Clubs, the casino group where takeover rumours continue to circulate, rose 11p to 419p, with Merrill Lynch said to be making encouraging noises. Lloyds Chemists, on renewed takeover speculation, was at one time up 6p to 262p.

BSkyB, the satellite television group, added 6p to 408p as it signalled it had, in effect, gained a monopoly over professional football in this country by signing up the Endeavour League clubs.

Chuff Resources, in takeover talks since early this month, retreated 15p to 73p as worries surfaced that the predator had decided to walk away.

Asbanti, the goldminer in

Ghana, and Echo Bay, a US group, were regarded as the most likely buyers.

Among builders there was interest in YJ Lovell with, it was said, some big orders in the pipeline. The shares rose 2p to 22p. One institution, Scottish Amicable, announced a 4.9 per cent shareholding. Recently, Lovell sold its plant hire division for £6.4m.

Alvis, the defence group, advanced 4p to 149p. Results are due next week. The market is looking for more than £8m against £5.8m.

Rhino, the computer games retailer, held at 16.5p. The group is raising £9m through a rights issue and has achieved the backing of US group, Electronic Boutique. Tim Steer at Merrill Lynch thinks Rhino, once traded at around 50p a share, will suffer a £6.6m loss in the 13 months to next January but get back into profits - £1.5m - in the following year.

Deals are due to start tomorrow in an unusual creation, Cash Converters. The group has operated in Australia for 10 years and is expanding aggressively in the UK and elsewhere. It is a franchise business, specialising in what is described as quality second-hand goods. The shares were placed by Henderson Crosthwaite at 24p, yielding almost 8 per cent.

Tadpole, the beleaguered maker of high performance notebook computers due to report tomorrow, rose 7p to 89p. The loss could be somewhat bigger than expected, say £10m against the predicted £9.3m. But there are hopes any gloom will be short-lived, with news of sales progress and, perhaps, an announcement another computer group is taking a 25 per cent stake in the group.

SHARE PRICE DATA

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio in the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: ex Ex rights x Ex-dividend x Ex-all x Unlisted Securities Market x Suspended pp Parity Paid pm Nil Paid Shares

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MARKET LEADERS: TOP 20 VOLUMES

Share	Vol/100	Share	Vol/100	Share	Vol/100
TI Group	4,000	ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000
ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000
ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000
ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000	ASDA Group	9,000

FT-SE 100 INDEX HOUR BY HOUR

Open 3651.7 up 2.7	11.00 3647.3 down 1.7	14.00 3640.7 down 0.3
09.00 3653.1 up 4.1	12.00 3644.3 down 1.1	15.00 3638.8 down 10.2
10.00 3650.9 up 1.9	13.00 3641.6 down 2.7	16.00 3641.8 down 7.2
		Close 3648.8 down 0.2

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
BT	125.00	BT	125.00	BT	125.00
BT	125.00	BT	125.00	BT	125.00
BT	125.00	BT	125.00	BT	125.00
BT	125.00	BT	125.00	BT	125.00

RETAILERS, FOOD

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

RETAILERS, GENERAL

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

TOBACCO

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

TRANSPORT

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

SPIRITS, WINES & CIDERS

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

WATER

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

SUPPORT SERVICES

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

PROPERTY

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

LIFE ASSURANCE

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

MEDIA

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

PRINTING & PAPER

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

PHARMACEUTICALS

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

OTHER FINANCIAL

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

OIL EXPLORATION

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

OIL, INTEGRATED

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

INVESTMENT TRUSTS

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

GAS DISTRIBUTION

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

HEALTH CARE

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

INSURANCE

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

ENGINEERING

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

BUILDING MATERIALS

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00

BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION

Share	Price	Share	Price	Share	Price
ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	9.00	ASDA Group	

sport

Russell thrives on the method in his madness

Wicketkeepers, like goalkeepers, are widely held to fluctuate between the mildly eccentric and a sandwich short of a picnic. And if county cricketers were to be canvassed on which one of their members was considered to be the ultimate five-ball over, England's current custodian would almost certainly top the poll.

So does the man himself regard himself as, so to speak, a barking Jack Russell? "No, not at all. People who don't know me might think I'm... but no, I'm not... it's just that, well, how can I put it... er, um, yeah, let's face it, I am. Totally potty."

He also does not admit to being superstitious. "Who me? No, not at all. So why is he still batting in the same shirt, vest, flannels and trousers he wore when scoring his maiden Test (and first-class) century at Old Trafford in 1989? And what about that floppy sun-hat he has worn in every match since joining the staff at Gloucestershire in 1982? "Well, I'm a bit of creature of habit, I suppose. I like the same routine. I once had steak and chips for 28 consecutive nights in India, and I was the only one who wasn't ill. But superstitious? No, well, er, oh all right, I probably am."

Russell's room-mates, on the other hand, do not consider him to be anything other than completely normal. What could he be more ordinary than a bloke who exists on mugs of tea, chocolate biscuits ("24 packets a month") bananas, honey, baked beans and breakfast cereal, washes his own kit, and hangs it from the lampshade to dry? "All except for the floppy hat, that is. That only gets washed twice a year, and I fold it over a biscuit jar and a key before it goes into the airing cupboard. Only way it keeps its shape."

Russell has tried normality, and discovered that it does not work for him. In fact, it was responsible for 14 months of not being required by his country, and 14 Test matches passing him by while England looked to the likes of Alec Stewart and Stephen Rhodes to fulfil the modern concept of wicketkeepers being required to do more than merely keep wicket.

All through that period, Russell was told how unlucky he was, and how he (by comment consent the best wicketkeeper in England) should have been

Martin Johnson, in Johannesburg, discovers the secrets of the England wicketkeeper's success

in the team. "Load of bollocks" Russell says. "It's a common fact now that a keeper has to score runs. If I had scored 50 every time I went to the crease, I would never have been dropped. And it was my own fault."

"In the past I was so frightened of getting out I wouldn't play a shot. I tried to look like Boycott. So tell me, what the hell was I doing? I was worried about how I looked than how many runs I was making. So nowadays I'm not scared of getting out. I know how I'm trying to score my runs and, above all, I don't give a toss what it looks like."

What it looks like is, frankly, not pretty. Russell makes John Emburey look like Wally Hammond, and there is more grace

"Now I play each game as if it is my last. For the first time I'm playing for the sheer fun of it"

about someone shovelling coal into an old steam engine than Russell, hunched and square-eyed, swatting and squinting international bowlers into a state of gibbering incomprehension.

So how does Russell feel about his natural ability to get up a bowler's nose? "I absolutely bloody well love it," he says. "It's all as Baldrick would say, part of the cunning plan. When I see a bowler getting upset, it gives me a little glow inside. He loses his rag, bowls me a couple of loose ones, and I'm winning, isn't it? Yes, I can honestly say it's very rewarding being a pain in the arse."

However, it was pain centred more around the cardiac region which led Russell to reappraise his approach to the game. "I can't tell you how much agony I felt not being in the side. Look at England versus Australia at Lord's. It's the ultimate of ultimates, and when I wasn't there at 11 o'clock on the Thursday morning, I felt totally depressed."

"I had played 36 Tests when I was dropped on the last tour to Australia and I thought maybe that was my lot. The only things that kept me sane - or as sane as I ever will be - were my benefit year, taking on the captaincy of Gloucestershire, and my painting."

It was because Russell recognised his own idiosyncratic nature that he had to be pushed into the captaincy at Gloucestershire by the man he temporarily replaced last summer, Courtney Walsh. "I was always so tied up with my own game, sitting in the corner worrying about what I was going to do, that I frankly didn't think I was up to the job."

"So it came as a pleasant surprise when it made me what I consider to be a much better player. I got a great kick out of captaining the side, and having to cope with other people's individual needs made me far less of an intense person. It's made me a lot wiser than I was, which is what you need when the bones start to ache - as they do - more and more each year."

"For instance, why didn't it occur to me five years ago to be a more positive cricketer? Why the hell didn't I? I suppose it's all part of life's learning process, and now I play each game as though it might be my last. For almost the first time I'm playing for the sheer fun of it."

That might be so, but, as Raymond Illingworth has said more than once on this tour: "If there was a more 100 per cent professional than Jack, I never met him." Almost everything Russell does is geared to perfecting his game, including becoming a near teetotaler. "I used to hit the booze too much in my early days, and it took me a while to realise how much it affected my reactions. Alcohol slows you down, so now I only touch the very occasional glass of wine."

Russell's value to England with the bat was once again being demonstrated when, on 50 not out during the first Test in Pretoria, he was ordered - protesting - from the field by the South African umpire Cyril Mitchley. "I've seen what lightning can do in these parts," Mitchley said, eyeing the approaching electrical storm, and



Keeping control: Jack Russell learned a lot about himself through captaincy

Photograph: Allsport

I don't want any dead cricketers on my hands."

However, in general terms Russell is just about the last person to complain about bad weather, as it was two washed-out days at Worcester in the summer of 1987 which set him on the road to becoming an accomplished artist as a cricketer.

"I got bored sitting around the dressing-room, so I wandered into town and bought a sketch pad and some pencils. I

honestly didn't know that I had any talent for drawing, largely because I never even did art at school."

"Anyway, I sketched away all summer, took them into a local gallery in Bristol to have them framed - just to hang on the wall at home as souvenirs - and the bloke there said he'd like me to do some more for an exhibition."

"I went to Pakistan with England that winter, came back with

40 sketches, and they were put on sale for between £50 and £70. No one was more amazed than me when they sold out in two days."

Russell has now turned from sketching to painting, and he recently bought a derelict pub in Chipping Sodbury and turned it into a gallery. On this tour he has been painting old Boer War battle sites, and during the last game in Bloemfontein visited Sannah's Post, where the

wiped out British forces were awarded four VCs.

He is also painting the various Test grounds, and - having recaptured the moment of England's Test victory in Barbados on the last tour to the Caribbean - is hoping for something similarly uplifting this winter. "The moment we win the series," he said, "that will be when I'll really want to paint. They tell me Cape Town would make a nice picture."

Lara to 'review' future

Tony Cozier reports from Barbados on reaction to a hero suffering fatigue

As West Indies cricket tried to take in Brian Lara's sudden withdrawal from the team that arrives in Australia tomorrow for the World Series tournament of one-day internationals, the prime concern of officials was understanding the record-breaking batsman's problems.

Peter Short, president of the West Indies Cricket Board of Control, who tried last weekend to talk Lara into changing his mind, said the Trinidadian "feels he wants a complete break to review his future".

In the year and a half since Lara surpassed the highest individual scores in Test and first-class cricket in the space of six weeks, he has played virtually non-stop. It is clear that tiredness was not the only factor, and probably not the principal factor in his decision. It came a day after he had been fined by a WICBC disciplinary committee 10 per cent of his tour fee for breaching the code of discipline during the summer's tour of England.

Short and Alloyd Lequay, president of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board, agreed the fine had upset Lara. Lequay said Lara believed his problem in England, when he went absent without permission for three days, had been resolved by the Tour committee, and Short himself at the time.

The WICBC will obviously consider what action should be taken against Lara in this case. The West Indies' next engagement after Australia is the World Cup in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in February and March and Lara's participation is in understandable doubt.

"I don't know how he's going to feel about going to the World Cup or how the West Indies Board is going to feel about his availability," Short said. "This is a matter the Board will have to discuss."

Lequay said Lara has told him he would captain the Trinidad and Tobago team in the domestic Red Stripe Cup, which starts on 26 January.

Lara's gruelling itinerary

Year	Series	Tests	One-day matches
1994	(season with Warwickshire)	3	10
1995	In NZ	2	3
	v Australia	4	4
	In England	6	3
	In Sharjah	0	5
Totals:		15	25

Mike Rowbottom examines why some of the best men and women in sport lose their motivation

When exceptional talent goes over the edge

When the most naturally gifted cricketer in the world expresses a desire not to play cricket - as Brian Lara has this week - one has to wonder whether too much talent can be a bad thing.

Lara is far from the first outstanding sporting figure to absent himself from his area of excellence, and will certainly not be the last. George Best, whose footballing ability set him apart from his fellow professionals, is perhaps the archetypal example here. However, over the years, others have come to grief for a variety of reasons - Mike Tyson in boxing, Jennifer Capriati in tennis, the multiple world record holder Henry Rono in athletics.

"The idea that people reach a certain point and then lose interest is a big area of study," Bruce Hale, an American sports psychologist based at the University of Stafford, said. "Stress and high-level competition begin to get to them."

"Many outstanding sportsmen and women are coddled and given special privileges, and many of them may develop the idea 'Hey, I'm God's gift to the world. All I have to do is

turn up and perform and everything will be fine.' But sooner or later reality will strike. They are going to run into crises."

One of the most profound crises for the high achiever may be the height of the achievement itself, according to Jonathan Zimerman, a member of the British Olympic Association's psychology advisory group.

"The usual motivating factors for sporting performers are to demonstrate ability and gain social approval. But elite performers such as Lara go beyond those needs and focus on the mastery of what they are doing. "Lara is obviously extra-talented and has established complete mastery in one area. So you have to ask - what's left for him to do? Where do his next goals lie? If you had talked to him a couple of years ago he would doubt have said that. That's the danger of exceptional talent. While cricket is well and truly under his control, maybe the financial factor is causing him to be disturbed."

Another problematic factor for the super-talented sporting figure comes into play when there is a shift in their motivation for continuing success.

"Lara, for instance, has come



Naturals in neutral: the tennis player Jennifer Capriati (left) and the West Indian cricketer Brian Lara are great talents who have both sought a break from sport

into a lot of money relatively quickly," Zimerman said. "That represents a shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation. While cricket is well and truly under his control, maybe the financial factor is causing him to be disturbed."

Capriati's fall from grace may have been influenced by a similar shift. "When she was just



playing the game she became successful because of her natural talents, but then she had to think about financial concerns, and parental concerns, and coaching concerns. It became too much."

The clear imperative in such cases is to maintain a balance between the sporting and non-sporting life. Perhaps Lara's time out is simply based in a de-

sire to redress that balance, but it is not an easy thing to do, and sporting organisations are increasingly seeking to offer support in this area.

The US Olympic Committee, for example, is building support mechanisms into many of its sports to help competitors with mental as well as physical preparation.

In this country, the British Olympic Association has established a scheme entitled Planning for Success which involves a group of former top-level performers, such as the Olympic swimming gold medalist Adrian Moorhouse and Olympic sailing champion Mike McIntyre, addressing national squads.

One of the main elements of the course confronts the motivational side, as John Linna, from the BOA technical department, explained. "We stress the need to balance sporting commitment with the rest of life. It is not strictly a time balance, but a matter of becoming a whole person. You must not forget that there is more to life out there."

Paradoxically, young people who get the very best out of

themselves in sporting arenas are often unable to connect that with the rest of their life.

"I think a lot of athletes don't realise that they have developed some very good life skills in their sport," Hale said. "They forget this when it comes to using them in real life. It is scary sometimes to go into new areas where you are not good. But it is a matter of making them aware of their capabilities."

More than one sports psychologist has praised the efforts of Manchester United's manager, Alex Ferguson, to prevent the extraordinary talents of Ryan Giggs from being compromised by undue media attention and commercial obligations. However, Ferguson has had to be careful he does not provoke his young player into an undesirable reaction. When the rules were relaxed a little last year, Giggs lost his form at the same time as he found a higher media profile.

Finding the correct balance in a sporting life is not easy, especially for those of extreme ability. Perhaps American Football teams have the right idea - they appoint their own priests.

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

The future of Paul Newlove could be decided today, with signs that a deal to take him from the Bradford Bulls is close to being completed.

Bradford have called a press conference to announce the signings of players, the day after St Helens appealed to local businesses to help them put together a cash plus players offer that would bring the Great Britain centre to Knowsley Road.

St Helens have already had one part-exchange deal rejected and Newlove, for whom Bradford have been asking a world record £750,000, has pulled out of the Bulls' last two games. He turned down a move to Wigan two weeks ago and is thought to have set his heart on a move to St Helens.

Halifax have transfer-listed their winger, Mark Preston, at £70,000 - a price which will stir interest among clubs nearer

his Lancashire home. Preston lost his first-team place when he was injured earlier this season and is also reluctant to give up his job to become a full-time professional.

Both Castleford and Frano Botica have dampened speculation that the dual New Zealand international is about to make a return to rugby union with Moseley. John Joyner, the Castleford coach, has dismissed stories of a return as groundless rumour, while Botica says that he has merely been seen with an old friend who works for the Moseley club.

The former Wigan stand-off, rated as the best goalkicker in the game, has signed a two-year contract with Castleford, but has yet to play for them because of a broken leg sustained playing for the Auckland Warriors.

Oldham have transfer-listed their winger, Adrian Belle, at £45,000. Belle recently joined the police and has told his club he has no intention of turning full-time professional with the advent of the Super League.

O'Sullivan on song

Snooker

Ronnie O'Sullivan yesterday made himself the target that the other seven survivors will want the chance to knock over when he celebrated reaching the quarter-finals of the UK Championship yesterday by boasting: "I have got more ability than anyone else left in the tournament."

He said: "If I'm playing well, I can say I have won a tournament even before it started," he said. "That's how confident I feel. When I am flowing, it's a beautiful game. It's something you can't explain. Only a sportsman knows what it's like

when their game comes together. It's so easy and the best feeling in the world."

As if wary of sounding a touch too confident, the former champion, who completed a 9-2 victory over Scotland's Chris Small in Preston, added: "If I hit form I can win it again. But I can't really look forward any further than my next match. There are no easy games and I've got a tough quarter-final coming up."

O'Sullivan began with a 7-1 overnight lead and although Small won the first frame of the day, O'Sullivan took only another 27 minutes to complete the job, aided by breaks of 42 and 38. Results, Sporting Digest, page 19

Football

7.30 unless stated

FOURTH ROUND

Accrington v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)
Aston Villa v QPR (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)
Middlesbrough v Birmingham (7.45)
Norwich v Bolton (7.45)
Wolves v Coventry (7.45)

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD

Crewe v Burnley

SOUTHERN SECTION

Swindon v Hereford (7.45)

FA UMBRO TROPHY Third qualifying round

replay: Boston Utd v Leek Town

ICE LIGA: Charlton Trophy second round:

Exeter and Exel v Lewes

NORTHERN COUNTRIES EAST LEAGUE CUP

Second round: Setry v Helston; Sheffield v

Ossett Albion

GREAT MILLS LEAGUE Premier Division:

Trenton v Torrington

TODAY'S FIXTURES

7.30 unless stated

FOURTH ROUND

Accrington v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)
Aston Villa v QPR (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)
Middlesbrough v Birmingham (7.45)
Norwich v Bolton (7.45)
Wolves v Coventry (7.45)

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD

Crewe v Burnley

SOUTHERN SECTION

Swindon v Hereford (7.45)

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Ossett Albion

GREAT MILLS LEAGUE Premier Division:

Trenton v Torrington

Rugby Union

7.30 unless stated

FOURTH ROUND

Accrington v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)
Aston Villa v QPR (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)
Middlesbrough v Birmingham (7.45)
Norwich v Bolton (7.45)
Wolves v Coventry (7.45)

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD

Crewe v Burnley

SOUTHERN SECTION

Swindon v Hereford (7.45)

FA UMBRO TROPHY Third qualifying round

replay: Boston Utd v Leek Town

ICE LIGA: Charlton Trophy second round:

Exeter and Exel v Lewes

NORTHERN COUNTRIES EAST LEAGUE CUP

Second round: Setry v Helston; Sheffield v

Ossett Albion

GREAT MILLS LEAGUE Premier Division:

Trenton v Torrington

Basketball

7.30 unless stated

FOURTH ROUND

Accrington v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)
Aston Villa v QPR (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)
Middlesbrough v Birmingham (7.45)
Norwich v Bolton (7.45)
Wolves v Coventry (7.45)

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD

Crewe v Burnley

SOUTHERN SECTION

Swindon v Hereford (7.45)

FA UMBRO TROPHY Third qualifying round

replay: Boston Utd v Leek Town

ICE LIGA: Charlton Trophy second round:

Exeter and Exel v Lewes

NORTHERN COUNTRIES EAST LEAGUE CUP

Second round: Setry v Helston; Sheffield v

Ossett Albion

GREAT MILLS LEAGUE Premier Division:

Trenton v Torrington

Other sports

7.30 unless stated

FOURTH ROUND

Accrington v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)
Aston Villa v QPR (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)
Middlesbrough v Birmingham (7.45)
Norwich v Bolton (7.45)
Wolves v Coventry (7.45)

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD

Crewe v Burnley

SOUTHERN SECTION

Swindon v Hereford (7.45)

FA UMBRO TROPHY Third qualifying round

replay: Boston Utd v Leek Town

ICE LIGA: Charlton Trophy second round:

Exeter and Exel v Lewes

NORTHERN COUNTRIES EAST LEAGUE CUP

Second round: Setry v Helston; Sheffield v

Ossett Albion

GREAT MILLS LEAGUE Premier Division:

Trenton v Torrington

WEEKEND FIXTURES AND POOLS FORECAST

7.30 unless stated

FOURTH ROUND

Accrington v Sheffield Wednesday (7.45)
Aston Villa v QPR (7.45)
Leeds v Blackburn (7.45)
Liverpool v Newcastle (7.45)
Middlesbrough v Birmingham (7.45)
Norwich v Bolton (7.45)
Wolves v Coventry (7.45)

AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD

Crewe v Burnley

SOUTHERN SECTION

Swindon v Hereford (7.45)

FA UMBRO TROPHY Third qualifying round

replay: Boston Utd v Leek Town

ICE LIGA: Charl

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